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“Adulterous Wives in Restoration Comedy”

A tantalizing woman’s worse than devil.

(Aphra Behn *The Lucky Chance*)

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1 Introduction

The subject of adultery in sixteenth- and seventeenth century England and in particular the relationship between the participants in the adulterous affair has often been investigated in recent criticism (Morgan-Russell 347). With regard to the theme of adultery in Restoration comedy, it is especially the notorious rake-hero that has frequently been analysed, whereas the character of the adulterous wife has not excited an equally large amount of scholarly interest. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the portrayal of adulterous wives in seven selected Restoration comedies. Moreover, this study provides information about the historical background, the main characters, the various cuckolding plots, the means of disguise and the language in the plays. Each chapter begins with a short introduction and a brief outline.

As regards political and ideological readings of Restoration sex comedies, the focus has been mainly on class and gender identities and on the social forces the characters engage, oppose and signify. The social structures of a post-revolutionary and a post-absolutist world, as portrayed in many selected comedies, are certainly as interesting as the individual characters revolting against them (Rosenthal 10). Payne Fisk states that historical interpretations of Restoration sex comedies in the last two decades have moved their focus from sexuality towards politics. The characters' sexual behaviour is thus often read as signifying larger social forces as, for example, class tensions or royalist beliefs. Therefore, "sexual desire can never be 'about' itself" (Payne Fisk ix), but most frequently stands for something else (Payne Fisk ix).

This diploma thesis not only provides an analysis of the character of the adulterous wife but also investigates the sexual and political power struggle, which is the dominate force in the selected comedies. The plays will not only be compared as regards similarities and differences in the portrayal of characters and sexual politics, but also to find out whether the characters in Behn's and Pix's comedies are portrayed differently than those in the plays of their male counterparts. Moreover, I want to prove that women engage in extra-marital affairs not because of their lewdness, as was often claimed by the patriarchal society in the Restoration period, but because of the patriarchal system which forced many young women to marry for reasons of wealth and not for reasons of love. What will also be pointed out is that due to the double sexual

morality of the time, women's adulterous affairs, in contrast to those of men, were condemned by the patriarchal society of the time and therefore needed to remain unknown to their husbands. Furthermore, this study will illustrate that it is the rakes who initiate the cuckolding acts, but the clever wives and witty servants who design the plots.

Listed in chronological order, the following seven sex comedies were chosen for this analysis.

William Wycherley	<i>The Country Wife</i>	1675
Aphra Behn	<i>Sir Patient Fancy</i>	1678
John Dryden	<i>The Kind Keeper; Or, Mr Limberham</i>	1678
Thomas Otway	<i>The Soldiers' Fortune</i>	1680
Edward Ravenscroft	<i>The London Cuckolds</i>	1681
Aphra Behn	<i>The Lucky Chance; Or, An Alderman's Bargain</i>	1686
Mary Pix	<i>The Spanish Wives</i>	1696

The reason for the selection of these comedies is that the cuckolding plot is of central importance in each play and, therefore, they are regarded as particularly useful for this analysis. Rosenthal defines the genre of the sex comedy as:

[...] a loosely defined group of plays, written in the twenty years or so following the Restoration of Charles II, that explores the boundaries of acceptable sexual relations and thus potentially, by extension, analogy, or direct link, challenge traditional authoritarian structures in general. (Rosenthal 7)

The focus of many Restoration sex comedies is most often on a young loving couple which desperately tries to escape the permanent supervision of parents, guardians or husbands. Many sex comedies explore similar issues and therefore it is the issues which define the genre. The politics of libertinism in the comedies could be seen with clarity if the plays are read with the assumption that audiences might have experienced similar characters in real life. Some plays provide arguments why characters should control themselves, many others, however do not. The wives in *The London Cuckolds*, for example, cannot think of a sufficient reason which would speak against an adulterous affair with the sexually potent rakes (Rosenthal 9). It is essential to note that sex comedies have always been controversial and, therefore, do not represent a spirit which was typical of the Restoration age. Immoral behaviour was often under attack in print, even at the time when the fame of libertine drama saw its height (Rosenthal 8). Although sex comedies were increasingly successful in the 1670s, it cannot be assumed

that the audience always totally approved of what was presented on the stage (Hume 90).

As regards the comedies selected, Wycherley's *The Country-Wife* 1675, is a play showing "blatantly suggestive sex scenes" (Hume 297) and is widely regarded as the beginning of the development of social sex comedy (72). Dryden's *The Kind Keeper; Or, Mr Limberham* 1678, "a roaring dirty farce" (Hume 329), is "perhaps the most cheerfully indecent of all Carolean comedies" (Hume 331) and, similar to *The Country Wife*, has a central place in the writings of the period. Behn's bawdy cuckolding comedy *Sir Patient Fancy* 1678 can also be described as a dirty farce with much fast-paced action and a dynamic outcome (Hume 328). *The Soldiers' Fortune* 1680 is one of Otway's "serious, bitter satires whose surface gaiety does little to mask the author's violent disillusionment and despair" (Hume 1983: 82). Pix's *The Spanish Wives* 1696 belongs to the category of reformed comedy and shows that the hard comedy of the 1670s and 1680s, such as Ravenscroft's farce *The London Cuckolds* 1681 or Behn's comedy *The Lucky Chance* 1686, had clearly softened by the end of the century.

The second chapter on the historical background gives a summary of marriage laws in the Restoration period and points to the sexual double standard of the time, which was not only dominant in Restoration society in general, but also in the female tradition in the theatre. The third chapter is concerned with the stereotypical figures of Restoration comedies and gives a close analysis of the rake-heroes, the adulterous wives and the cuckolded husbands. In addition, a thorough investigation of the sexual and political power struggle which is portrayed in the comedies will be provided. The fourth section is devoted to the cuckolding plots and examines similarities and differences as regards the meaning of the sexual act, the initiation and planning of cuckolding and the characters' motivations behind it. Moreover, this section examines the possibilities of freedom women had or did not have within and outside marriage. The fifth chapter investigates the means of deception and disguise and the behaviour of women in the Restoration period. The sixth and final section focuses on the use of language in the plays and provides a brief analysis of language as a means of power in the political and sexual power struggle as well as of the linguistic characteristics of the various stereotypical figures.

2 Marriage and sexual morality in the Restoration period

2.1 Marriage laws in the Restoration period

It is widely known that women were long denied formal education and it was only in the course of the seventeenth century that illiteracy among women started to decline as the Protestants believed that both men and women should be able to read the Bible. It was also the time when early feminists addressed the fact that women and men were not educated equally, the former being only trained in domestic skills, whereas the latter received education in many different subjects. The misogynist climate of the time strongly supported the general opinion that women possessed less intellectual potential than men and that they were basically unfit for learning. The only true profession for a woman, as believed, was becoming a wife and mother (Rubik 3). Generally speaking, marriage in the Restoration period was widely seen as **a woman's real vocation**. It is interesting to note that by marrying a wealthy man, a woman could change her status in life and improve her social position. However, it is worth mentioning that in turn she gave up her independence and became the subject of her husband, whom she was expected to obey. A cynical tradition implies that the only benefit of marriage for a woman was the possibility of a prosperous widowhood. Indeed, many women decided to marry in order to secure their future living financially (Macfarlane 149-150). Since marriage in a patriarchal society meant the transference of power over women to men, the husband received authority over all the people living in his house, as for example, his wife, children and servants.

Another aspect of great importance to all men was the absolute preservation of honour and therefore they were constantly concerned with their spouse's chastity and sexuality as an adulterous wife signified the husband's loss of household control. A wife's infidelity also meant that the man was no longer able to control his wife sexually and that therefore the legitimacy of his children remained doubtful. As a consequence he lost his reputation for manhood in society, a reputation that was established and destroyed by the judgments of fellow men (Foyster 65-67). The assertion of manhood was thus strongly dependent on the virtuous sexual conduct of women. It can be said that therefore power was transferred to women over men as the female's words and deeds could damage or even destroy the husband's status in society (Foyster 55).

Ironically, men could never be absolutely certain about their wife's or daughter's chastity and therefore constantly tried to read between the lines and deduce the meaning of women's behaviour, words and conversations (Foyster 93). Interestingly, a wife's adultery was often explained by the husband's impotence and his inability to please his wife sexually (Foyster 72).

Marriage was a social event that can be described as a long and complex process that involved successful courtship, which was followed by the public announcement of the engagement. After the public wedding ceremony, which was traditionally held at church, the marriage was consumed by the couple and often led to the wife's pregnancy. It is interesting to note that it was not only the family who showed a considerable interest in the arrangement of a marriage, but also relatives and friends as well as rivals, who often tried to influence a person's choice (Stone 1992: 12-13). The numerous motivations behind marriage depended on the family's social rank as well as on their household finances. In other words, the son of an aristocrat, for example, was getting married for different reasons than the son of craftsman (Macfarlane 149-150). Between 1680 and 1710 the ideals of the long existing patriarchal system, where women had a clearly subordinate role in society, and those of individualism in the choice of a marriage partner created conflicts in many wealthy households (Stone 1992: 12-13).

Concerning morality, it can be said that during this period morals were generally not high in England and with regard to the theatre it is often mentioned that many plays were criticized for their filthy and immoral content. It was basically aristocratic circles who were attacked for their moral licentiousness and accused of having an obsession with money and a sole interest in the increase of private possessions. According to Stone, many writers refer to this moral breakdown as happening in two phases. The libertinism under Charles II, which signifies the first phase, was a time when sexual depravity was mainly an instrument for physical enjoyment. After 1690, however, sexuality was largely used as a means for personal advancement and the increase of wealth (Stone 1993: 28). By the eighteenth century, the rise in the number of illegitimate children became a serious problem for society. Therefore communities were desperately trying to discover the fathers' names. This was usually and only done by questioning the mother either before or during childbirth, often by threatening to refuse the help of a midwife. It is interesting to note that questions about fatherhood were

solved by the mere interrogation of the mother. The father, unless he fled from the situation and was impoverished, was then forced to pay an annual sum to the parish for custody of the child until it reached an age of seven (Stone 1992: 14). Finally, Rubik states that terms such as libertinism and sexual freedom which are frequently used to describe life at Restoration time, mainly referred to the behaviours of the gentry and that the licentious activities of aristocratic men could be interpreted as a direct response to the Puritanism of the Commonwealth. Women, on the other hand, were still expected to remain chaste and virtuous in their behaviour and to keep a good reputation (Rubik 17).

Marriage and inheritance have long been used as a traditional means for the transmission of property. Indeed, the **question of property** has always played a central role, both before the wedding as well as at the breakdown of a marriage. It is widely known that the husband received a certain amount of money and several goods, referred to as the woman's dowry, from the bride's family on the day of their marriage. Matrimony also meant that the wife's belongings, such as personal and real property, were now controlled by the husband. To be more precise, it was the groom who now not only possessed his wife's household equipment, jewellery and money, but also freely spent the income earned by real estate unless it was previously conveyed to trustees and declared for the wife's personal usage. It does not come as a surprise that therefore husbands frequently used their spouse's capital in order to clear their own debts. However, it should be noted that the groom also became legally responsible for all the woman's liabilities, no matter whether they were collected before or during their marriage. This, of course, put a neglected wife in a powerful position as she could massively increase her spending and take on debts, which her husband was legally bound to repay. Consequently, a large number of men, but also women, married primarily for financial reasons in order to increase their wealth and settle their debts as a failure to pay was punished by arrest and confinement (Stone 1993: 25-26). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that marriage was often interpreted as **a gamble** in which man or woman was not likely to succeed. Intended marriage partners scarcely got to know each other before the wedding and, as divorce was a complicated legal process that cost a fortune, the bond between husband and wife lasted for a lifetime. The risk of taking the wrong decision and ending up in an unhappy marriage was regarded as relatively high (Macfarlane 166-167). As a consequence, many marriages at the time may have been loveless and unhappy. However, it is important to note that many women decided to

stay in a miserable marriage, because life in a patriarchal society was easier to endure for a wife than for a divorced women. To be more precise, separated or divorced women, even if they did not commit adultery, were frequently not allowed to meet their children and received only little financial support from their former husbands.

When it comes to extra-marital affairs, it can be said that many husbands, but also wives did engage in sex outside marriage. Keeping such a love affair totally secret, however, was beyond the bounds of possibility. The reason is that the household staff and guests were an unwanted intrusion on the married couple's privacy. Constantly interfering with other people's business and spreading gossip, visitors and servants seemed to be everywhere, only waiting for the discovery of an illicit affair (Stone 1993: 25-26). The following subchapter provides a brief summary of sexual morality in the Restoration period in order to illustrate the double moral standard existing at the time.

2.2 Sexual morality in the Restoration period

There was a clear **double standard of sexual morality** in the Restoration era, particularly when it comes to sex in an illegitimate context, that is to say outside marriage as well as in the form of prostitution or homosexuality. This means that on the one hand society frequently accepted men's extra-marital affairs, but on the other hand expressed disapproval of women's sexual misconduct. This double standard, according to Shoemaker, resulted from men's deep anxiety about women's burning and uncontrollable sexual desire. Hence, it was widely believed that wives needed to be controlled in order to ensure the legitimacy of children (Shoemaker 62). When it comes to sexual behaviour, men as well as women were generally believed to be capable of acting immorally. However, the existing double standard showed that male and female erotic desire was interpreted differently. To be more precise, male lust was regarded as a mere fact, and therefore not necessarily condemned by society. When seducing a woman, men not only wanted to gain satisfaction of their sexual needs, but also interpreted the act as a sexual conquest that filled them with pride.

Interestingly, the church criticized extramarital sexual relationships of both men and women. The law, however, was built upon and also acted upon the double standard, which means that unfaithful wives were more likely to be penalized than promiscuous and lecherous husbands. In addition, women who committed adultery were also

commonly affronted in public, whereas hardly anybody publicly condemned the extramarital affairs of men. Clearly, men as well as women enjoyed extra-marital sex, but existing proofs suggest that such activities were mainly initiated by men. The risks for women who engaged in sex outside marriage included divorce, pregnancy, venereal disease, and being publicly called a whore. It is argued that therefore many women were either forced to engage in extra-marital sex or sought for social or economic advancement. It is also argued that men thought that they possessed the right to abuse women in public, that is in the street, and that they considered the use of violence an acceptable means for conquering women, which consequently led to an increase in the unidentified number of rapes (Shoemaker 72-76).

It is interesting to note that an act was passed in 1650 which stated that adultery was an illegal activity that could only be carried out by women. **An adulterous act** committed by men, on the other hand, was termed fornication and not regarded as a crime. What in fact caused humiliation for men was not so much the disclosure of adulterous affairs, but the consequences of extra-marital sex, such as, illegitimate children or venereal diseases. 'The pox', as syphilis was widely referred to from the sixteenth century onwards, was widely spread in Europe at the time. The illness, explained as a consequence of illicit sex, resulted in terrible pain and often led to impotence, in some cases even to death (Foyster 78-81). The reason why many writers at the time often referred to infidelity as theft is that illegitimate children were seen as depriving other legitimate family members of their inheritance and because women were regarded as the husbands' property. Illicit sex, therefore, was regarded as theft of their property. It was thus of course mainly wealthy men of higher social status that were almost constantly concerned about their wife's chastity as they risked to give their financial and material possessions to children of different blood (Foyster 125). Indeed, fornication was only regarded as disgraceful if a man spread venereal disease and caused trouble in his household. A married man needed to show that he had absolute authority over his household members and at the same time was expected to guarantee the flawless sexual lives of the servants. However, it is widely known that some household heads engaged in sexual relationships with their young female servants (Foyster 86-87).

With regard to prostitution it can be said that a double standard certainly existed. The church openly expressed its disapproval, whereas society half-heartedly tolerated

prostitution, as it meant that male lust was satisfied while decent women could be protected. Indeed, men often spent their money in brothels when they did not find other women who willingly engaged in sex. The fact that it was the prostitutes who came under frequent attack when health issues arose and not their male customers shows the double standard of morality (Shoemaker 76-77). The next chapter is also devoted to the double standard of the time and shows how female Restoration playwrights were treated differently than their male counterparts.

2.2.1 Double sexual morality in the Restoration theatre

In the period after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 women started to take an active part in the theatre as managers, actresses or playwrights. More than fifty plays by women playwrights were published in the period between 1660 and 1710. It is worth mentioning that publishers in general only brought out successful plays, which means that it is likely that an even larger number of works were produced and put on stage. These were then either forgotten or published anonymously, as copyright was only owned by theatres and publishers, not by the playwrights. At the time before the closure of playhouses by Parliamentary edict in 1642, the theatre had been dominated by men in all spheres. So-called boy actors, for example, had taken over female roles and grown men played dame parts. When the theatres reopened in 1660 after the eighteen-year Puritan rule of the Interregnum, new acting companies had to be formed and these companies were inspired by the theatres in France, where female roles were taken by women. As regards female playwrights it can be said that in the beginning the majority neither came from the gentry nor had any working experience in the theatre. After the turn of the century the situation was different and many women playwrights had already worked as actresses or came from theatrical families (Lyons; Morgan vii-xi).

Audiences have been delighted and fascinated by the professional actress since she first appeared on the London stage in 1660. Bush-Bailey explains that she was “admired and derided, desired and vilified” (Bush-Bailey 12). The actress had a unique professional status, which was unusual for women in the seventeenth-century. It is worth mentioning that actresses hardly ever received the same payment as their male counterparts. However, they were “hired as part of the new money-making theatrical enterprise under a royal patent” (12) and thus “shared with actors some of the privileges and protection of being recognised as His Majesty’s Servants” (12). The women’s work in the public

and commercial sphere of a patriarchal society caused anxieties among people, who soon linked actresses with prostitutes. The Restoration audience was not only fascinated by the actress' performance on stage, but also by the stories that surrounded her private life. One of the reasons why parallels were quickly drawn to prostitution was that "the visual spectacle of [the actress'] acting body on stage and the potential availability of her sexually active body off stage, created an ambiguous perspective" (13). With regard to female playwrights, the attitudes of Restoration society showed similar anxieties, since female writers, similar to actresses, also worked in the public sphere. It is noted that the woman playwright was often not only confronted with mockery of the female sex in prologues and epilogues, but also with scandalous stories about her private life, which discredited her personality and her written work (Bush-Bailey 13).

As far as the audiences in Restoration theatre are concerned, not only members of the aristocracy, but men and women from all classes were present in the pit and boxes. Even a number of prostitutes could be found among the spectators. It is widely known that the auditorium was filled with a constant noise level as the theatre was regarded as a place for amusement and pleasure, where viewers presented themselves and carefully observed others. By the early eighteenth-century female spectators strongly objected to the abusive portrayal of women in a variety of plays and to the indecency and lewdness presented on stage, which led to a change in the content and selection of plays performed. However, it is important to mention that this movement towards sentimental comedy was part of a wider cultural change (Shoemaker 280).

With regard to female playwrights, **Aphra Behn** was among the first few women who earned their living through the publication of written work in the late seventeenth century. The main types of female writing at that time included poetry, romances, books on housewifery and medicine as well as a large number of religious works. Many women writers decided against playwriting, but instead preferred genres such as periodicals. The reason is that many feared sexual defamation when writing for the stage. Aphra Behn, for instance, took up a rather bawdy and indecent style similar to male writing and was soon accused of having an equally lewd sexual life in reality. Despite the fact that only little is known about Behn's life, it is clear that these accusations continually tarnished her already slightly unsavoury reputation. It was not only female playwrights, but also actresses who were accused of leading indecent and

wicked lives and were thus often attacked and sexually harassed off stage. The audiences thoroughly enjoyed the actresses' provocative and teasing performances on stage and at the same time were led to assume that they showed a similar behaviour in real life (Shoemaker 280-286). In other words, the boundary between the roles and lives of actresses were commonly blurred by the public. Women playwrights, such as Aphra Behn or Susanna Centlivre, also found themselves not only criticized for writing sex comedies, but also confronted with accusations of writing the cuckolding plots out of personal experience. However, it was also for reasons of gender that female playwrights aroused the interest of the public and often also received enthusiastic applause for their plays. There are certain aspects in comedies written by female playwrights that differ from those written by their male counterparts. Behn and Centlivre, for example, do not show such a strong interest in sexual potency or a licentious way of life as often focussed on by male writers, but, quite on the contrary, try to establish a sense of balance between attraction and mockery. That is to say that in their comedies men received the same amount of ridicule as women did (Rubik 26-31).

It is particularly in her prefaces and prologues that the writer attacked the patriarchal system for repressing women and denying them a public role in society. Moreover, she frequently addressed the moral double standard of society in her prefaces and defended herself against misogynist accusations regarding her sexual life. However, Behn cannot be called a radical feminist as none of her works openly criticises social rules (Rubik 34-36).

In her preface to *The Lucky Chance; or, An Alderman's Bargain* 1686 Behn sees herself as a female playwright confronted with the malice of unjust criticism and points towards a moral double standard which was clearly applied by male critics in the evaluation of her play. Ironically, she goes on to excuse these critics for their nasty and jealous character and states that it seems to be in their nature to condemn successful comedies by female playwrights. It is worth mentioning that a Restoration play could be described as successful when it made it to the third night, which means that all the earnings of that night belonged to the playwright. A thriving play would make it to six nights, a very successful one to nine nights. Referring to the severe and unfair censure, Behn addresses her literary opponents in the following way:

And nothing makes them so through-stitched an enemy as a full third day; that's crime enough to load it with all manner of infamy; and when they can no other way prevail with the town, they charge it with the old never-failing scandal--that 'tis not fit for the ladies: as if (if it were as they falsely give it out) the ladies were obliged to hear indecencies only from their pens and plays; and some of them have ventured to treat 'em as coarsely as 'twas possible, without the least reproach from them; and in some of their most celebrated plays have entertained 'em with things that, if I should here strip from their wit and occasion that conducts 'em in and makes them proper, their fair cheeks would perhaps wear a natural colour at the reading them; yet are never taken notice of, because a man writ them, and they may hear that from them they blush at from a woman. (Preface 9-21)

The playwright then appeals to the reader's common sense and reason and puts forward that her comedies are no more immoral or sinful than those of her male counterparts. Her plays, she claims, have not received fair criticism as they were initially condemned, merely because of the fact they were written by a woman playwright. Behn repeatedly and outspokenly points towards the double standard of the time, argues for female equality in society and attacks the double morality that critics consciously apply when judging her work.

And this one thing I will venture to say, though against my nature, because it has a vanity in it: that had the plays I have writ come forth under any man's name, and never known to have been mine, I appeal to all unbiased judges of sense, if they had not said that person had made as many good comedies, as any one man that has writ in our age; but a devil on't, the woman damns the poet. (Preface 93-98)

3 Restoration Comedy

Aphra Behn, Mary Pix and many other Restoration playwrights had to cater to the audiences' tastes and since these tastes were likely to change quickly, there was often only little time between writing and producing a play (Hume 17). The rhetoric of many prologues and epilogues was intended to flatter the audiences, who thought of themselves as more rakish than they actually were (Hume 51). Not only the audience, but also the king had a considerable influence on the playwrights and their writings. Authors such as John Dryden, William Wycherley and Thomas Durfey knew Charles II personally and made use of his ideas and suggestions. This clearly shows that Court patronage was of great importance to many playwrights (Hume 27-28). With regard to the comedies, it is noted that well-liked types, devices, plots and characters emerge in new combinations in each season. The 1670s, for example, saw the rise of the sex comedy, which had a titillating effect on the audience. Consequently, "writers pushed even further in sex, innuendo, and sexual deviation" (Hume 17-18). Although these sex comedies primarily aimed at entertaining the audience, it is essential to note that they contain a lot of social and political commentary. The plays can be described as "acute, pointed, pathetic, or satiric", but only seldom do they "probe character deeply or present ideas which are essentially more than commonplaces" (Hume 30). With regard to different types of sex comedies, the following forms are identified: cynical libertine display as in *The Man of Mode*, satire as in *Friendship in Fashion* and sex in the form of farce as in *The London Cuckolds* (Hume 377). In these plays, sex could either serve as a subject for the titillation of the audience, as for example in Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*, or as an instrument to illustrate "the conflict of man's natural desires with society's conventions", such as in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. However, the sex theme could also be used as subject and instrument at the same time, as for instance in Dryden's *Marriage A-la-Mode* (Hume 144). As regards the characters of Carolean and post-Carolean comedy, a great diversity and range from the despicable to the admirable can be observed. The structure, in which these characters are presented, varies, since the plays either emphasize 'action', 'character' or 'discourse' (Hume 48-49). It is noted that between 1660 and 1710 the plays showed a great diversity in characters, plot, discourse and satire. "[The playwright] could evoke anything between contempt and admiration for the lead characters; emphasize plot, character, or discourse; and work with radically different balances of wit, humour, satire, and example" (Hume 61-62).

Therefore, the following detailed analysis of the seven comedies selected will not only focus on stock characters, such as the adulterous wife, the rake-hero and the cuckolded husband but also investigate the various cuckolding plots in the fourth chapter and examine the means of disguise in the fifth section. The sixth chapter is meant to illustrate the discourse, in other words, the use of the characters' language in the plays. With regard to Mary Pix's comedy *The Spanish Wives* 1696, it is important to note that by 1695 the audience's taste had already changed considerably. The elements and stock characters of the plays remained the same, but "the 'hard' view has given way to the 'humane' outlook [and] positive example is enjoying a rapid rise" (Hume 422). It is interesting to note that some old notorious stock plays, such as *The Soldiers' Fortune*, remained popular among the audience and were frequently performed, whereas racy new comedies ran into strong opposition (Hume 493). Therefore, Mary Pix's play is not used as an example for the bawdy sex comedies that remained popular in the 1670s and 1680s, but is primarily meant to serve as an additional play to Aphra Behn's comedies in order to investigate the differences between male and female playwrights.

Hume points out that "the essence of comedy is to ridicule" (Hume 39) and that "any kind of character from the contemptible to the admirable" (Hume 49) is imitated in Restoration comedy. This chapter will provide an analysis of the rake-heroes, the cuckolded husbands and the adulterous wives portrayed in the selected plays, illustrate their character traits and behaviour patterns and outline striking similarities between the characters in the different texts. The focus will not only be put on class and political background, but also on forced marriages and its consequences for the wives, their relationships to former lovers and their husbands. In addition, a distinction between true wits and witwouds will be made. Weber notes that it is the character's "manipulation of language and understanding of the distinction between substance and mask" (5), which differentiates a true wit from a witwoud. A true wit is not only able to improvise and react to changing situations, but also has an inventive mind and quickly finds solutions to occurring problems. Another interesting description is given by Ramczyk, who refers to the witwouds as the 'false wits' and provides an additional categorization of the 'witless', "the poor unfortunates who can only aspire to true wit and manners" (15), as can be seen in the following quote.

The true wits [...] are those gentlemen and ladies who are successful in presenting the socially prescribed, artful mask of the polite world. These characters are accomplished in the physical manners and deportment and adept in the required verbal dexterity, and have achieved in all outward manifestation a sense of elegant ease. (Ramczyk 15)

The witwounds, also described as the fops, can be still in their youth or already of old age. They know about the practices of social behaviour but “often go too far in the execution of their manners”, with “excess being their hallmark” (Ramczyk 15).

In order for a better understanding of Restoration comedy, a short summary of the crisis and changes in Restoration politics as well as its effects on the theatre will be given. **The restoration of the monarchy** with Charles II in 1660 glorified the return of an old order which brought political stability after two decades of political experiments and religious changes. What, however, could not be restored were the former structures of authority, which led to political and cultural changes. The Restoration plays staged in the theatres mirrored “national unease and social alteration” (Munns 2000: 142). The political crisis in the 1670s and subsequent “intense political engagement in the drama radically transformed dramatic form and content” (Owen 2000: 158). Although the political change was certainly not the only cause of the dramatic shifts, it is interesting to note that “a change in comedy, the development of tragedy, and the rise of the sentimental” (Owen 2000: 158) occurred at the same time. The mid-Restoration crisis is also referred to as the **Exclusion crisis**, in which the Whigs tried to exclude the heir James Stuart, Charles II’s Catholic brother, from the succession. The Whigs’ fears of a dramatic increase in Catholicism grew with the **Popish-Plot** scare of 1678. The Tories wanted to prevent a similar rebellion as happened in 1649, which had resulted in English civil wars and the exclusion of Charles I. Uproar was caused by Titus Oates’ claims of a ‘popish’ plot to murder Charles II and introduce Catholicism in autumn 1678, which is regarded as the beginning of the crisis. There was widespread fear that Charles would use the money he requested from Parliament for a standing army against the English people. New elections were won by the opposition, also referred to as the Whigs, who desired to exclude James from the succession. Charles II, however, received French funds, which allowed a rule without Parliament and until 1688 “the opposition to popery and arbitrary government went into abeyance” (Owen 2000: 159).

As regards the theatre scene, spectators showed greater interest in the political arena than in watching the plays. As a result, the two theatre companies, the King's Company and The Duke's Company, merged into a single United Company in 1682. It is important to mention, that the censorship during the Crisis was greater than any time since the reopening of theatres in 1660 and, consequently, a number of plays were banned from the stage. However, play texts continued to be published uncensored, even if the play was initially banned from performance. It was only in 1681 when decisions were made to control the press and publication. The political change also had an effect on the comedies that were written at the time. William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, for example, is a sex comedy as it was fashionable in 1675. When political crisis deepened in 1678, Wycherley's type of sex comedy was overshadowed by political comedies. These new plays made use of similar methods and comic themes as the comedies of the early 1660s, which were famous for ridiculing the Whigs. Aphra Behn was among the first playwrights who addressed political issues in their plays. Thomas Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune* 1680 is a typical anti-Whig satire set in London, where Whigs were particularly strong. The Tory Reaction in the years 1681 and 1682 led to an increase of city comedies which comically attacked Whigs and Puritans, as for instance in Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* 1681 (Owen 2000: 159-161). Munns notes that after 1688, Restoration dramas changed due to the emergence of a new political consensus and points out that, generally speaking,

[r]akes reform, ranting heroes become the standby of burlesque, merchants become patriots, not parasites, adultery is treated seriously, religion and the clergy receive respect, and gender definitions, if not resolved, are codified. (Munns 2000: 155)

Or as Hume notes, when describing sentimental comedy and referring to Mary Pix's *The Spanish Wives* 1696: "The hard comedy has turned fairly mushy" (418).

Political turmoil in 1688/89 did not only change the government of the country, but also the theatre scene. James II, who succeeded the throne after Charles II's death in 1685, was ousted in the 'Glorious Revolution' in November 1688. The successors Mary II, James II's daughter, and her husband William III, unlike their predecessors, did not express particular interest in the theatre. By the end of 1689 some of the famous royalist playwrights, such as William Wycherley, Thomas Otway or Aphra Behn had already died in poverty. Dryden, loyal to the Roman Catholic belief, was banned from his public

office (Bush-Bailey 76). Bush-Bailey explains that “the move away from the libertinism of Restoration drama and toward the Sentimental drama which dominates the eighteenth century reflects the growing influence of what we might now call the middle-class audience” (76).

Many comedies of the Restoration period deal with the **theme** of weakening patriarchal authorities. Father figures and elders, for example, are portrayed as incompetent and occasionally even as perverse. The portrayal of daughters rebelling against arranged marriages shows that the subordination of women was “a social rather than natural or inevitable inequality” (Munns 2000: 144). Chernaik states that many repeated **plot motifs** in Restoration comedy deal with the problem of ‘Resisting a Private Tyranny’. They refer to a struggle for mastery, against a “conservative restraining force” (185), which is presented as unfair, but approved of by the law and social customs. The most prominent of these motifs is “impotent age and impatient youth” (Chernaik 185). The power of order, as presented by the father or husband, is illustrated as mercenary, conceited and ridiculous, which results in the audience’s expressed sympathies for the young rebel (Chernaik 185). Jacqueline Pearson notes that it is particularly the playwright Aphra Behn, who illustrates that all social relations are merely hidden power struggles (qtd. in Chernaik 184-185). As already mentioned in chapter 2.2, the loss of manhood, which is portrayed in impotent husbands, meant a loss of masculine authority and power. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that figures such as the eunuch or the contrary character of the rake developed in Restoration drama. The reason for the common equation of sexual potency with political control was the king’s virility and frequent sexual affairs, which were widely known. Women’s bodies in comedies are therefore often treated as a territory that must be owned and kept under control. Another issue that is repeatedly addressed in drama is that social distinctions cease to seem clear, as, for example, in Otway’s *The Soldiers’ Fortune*, which portrays the rake’s anxiety of social instability (Munns 2000: 145-147).

3.1 The rake-hero

Generally speaking, Restoration comedies show a variety of male characters as, for example, the male lead, his friend and the would-be friend, who is occasionally just a rival. Furthermore, there is the heavy father, who usually causes problems; the dolt; humour-butts, such as Pinchwife and Sir Jaspar Fidget in *The Country Wife*, and the

trickster, who is often a helper in the form of a clever servant. Moreover, a number of professional types are portrayed, such as the lawyer, the doctor or the parson. There is the displeased husband and the hypocrite, who is usually a pious puritan (Hume 130-131). The figure of the rake-hero, often the male lead, and his friend, show a number of characteristics. He communicates amiably with ease, meets women in secret places, seduces them with astounding self-confidence and convinces others to assist him, intentionally or inadvertently, with his plots (Gill 2000: 195). In the following quote, Munns points out that the comedies of the 1670s and 1680s defend an ideal of aristocratic English masculinity.

The energy and success with which the noble rakes of the mid-1670s and early 1680s cuckolding comedies seduce merchants' wives can be read as demonstrations of aristocratic male power and also as assertions of that power in the face of City and Whig political ascendancy. (Munns 2000: 147)

Frequently discussed questions in secondary literature are whether the rake-hero is really portrayed as a hero and whether clear lines can be drawn between the so-called true wits and the witwounds. Hume does not accept McDonald's suggestion that there are no 'heroes' in Restoration comedy. He also disagrees with Fujumura's assumption that there is always a clear distinction between ridiculed witwounds and admirable truewits, because characters such as Horner in *The Country Wife* contradict this argument. Horner is a witty, but certainly not a commendable figure, whose plans the audience supports (Hume 48).

The aristocratic **Horner**, rather unusual for Restoration comedies, is both, the trickster and male lead in *The Country-Wife* 1675. What is unique about Horner is the fact that he sacrifices his manhood by announcing that he is a eunuch, for the privilege of duping other characters and sleeping with their wives. This is particularly surprising in view of the usual male hierarchy of potency, which meant that men who had the reputation of being impotent were denied the respect of others. The figure of Horner has been frequently analysed and interpreted differently by various critics. Fujimura, for example, sees Horner as a truewit, who successfully plans his intrigue and exposes the manners and follies of London society (qtd. in Hume 100). Hume tries to investigate whether Horner's character is "satirized" or "denigrated", but comes to the conclusion that "no definitive answer is possible" (102). Interestingly, Horner successfully exposes the follies of other people, but he himself is never directly attacked. It can be argued that

he is a rather passive character who constantly wears a mask and hides his personality. Obviously, he is used as a sex object by the female hypocrites in the play. Hume sees Horner more as a “glutton” than a “connoisseur”, since the character relishes the prospect of cuckolding the husbands (102). Throughout the play Horner’s follies are never exposed, nor is his intrigue ever fully discovered by the husbands. This, together with the fact that the rake gets away unpunished in the end, shows that the audience is not meant to turn against him. Gerald Weales notes that “the hidden *Playboy* reader in all of us is bound to identify with his sexual triumphs” (qtd. in Hume 103). This may be true for a certain number of readers, but certainly not for all. The reason why the audience sides with Horner is that the attacked characters, such as Lady Fidget, Sir Jaspar Fidget or Pinchwife, are totally hypocritical and therefore not worth caring about. Secondly, it is worth noting that Horner shares his plans with audience right at the beginning of the play. This means that the readers are in the know and thus, similar to Horner, put into a superior position to the foolish husbands and other characters in the play.

Although Horner follows the libertine creed, *The Country Wife*, as comedies of manners in general, shows a socially rather conservative attitude. The marriage between witty heroine Alithea and the aristocratic rake Harcourt clearly upholds traditional social hierarchies. The moral behaviour of Restoration society is observed satirically as the play comically deals with cultural concerns as, for example, “the definition of gender roles, the regulation of sexual behaviour, the characteristics of class, and the compatibility of marriage partners” (Gill 2000: 191). Anderson notes that the play “satirizes ideologies of masculinity at the expense of marriage” (37). According to Corman, *The Country Wife* is a comedy that is “more punitive than sympathetic, more satiric than exemplary, and, arguably, more of humour than of wit” (59). Hume shares this opinion and states that the play “engages us not with witty conversation but with a rogue’s intrigue” (336). The rogues’ focus of attention in the comedy is solely on women and not on money. The duped characters are egotistical, greedy or hypocritical and thus morally inferior to the neither perfect nor admirable Horner. His cuckolding intrigues with Margery Pinchwife and Lady Fidget cannot be regarded as totally similar. Margery, a young naive country-bred, is driven into Horner’s arms by her notoriously jealous husband, whose unwise actions to keep his wife solely to himself backfire in the end. Horner is totally astonished when Pinchwife leads Margery, disguised as Alithea,

to his lodgings and almost spoils the plot by disclosing the girl's real identity. Horner's cuckolding plan was initially targeted at self-centred city husbands, such as Sir Jaspur Fidget (Corman 59-60). Wycherley does not offer any acceptable solutions to the moral issues presented in the play. Characters like Horner and the virtuous gang remain unchanged in the end and do not receive any punishment for their actions. They are thus likely to continue with their hypocritical behaviour and continue with their affairs in future (Corman 60-61).

Woodall, in John Dryden's *The Kind Keeper; Or, Mr. Limberham* 1678, is a "Horner figure" (Hume 229), who returns to London under a false identity and stays in the brothel run by the hypocrite Mrs Saintly. Woodall's father Aldo, "a whoremonger of decayed capacity" (Hume 330), does not identify the rake as his son. Woodall engages in sexual intercourse with many women in the play and discovery is always avoided in the last minute (Hume 330). Dryden's "roaring, dirty farce" (Hume 34), in contrast to Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, seems less worried about the stability of gender roles or sexual control. The play does not present any elegant, witty, and like-minded characters such as Alithea or Harcourt. Defining the characteristics of farces, Gill notes the following:

The social, economic, and familial alliances afforded by marriage implicitly ground farces and intrigue comedies, defining the stakes of the seductions, cuckoldings, incompatible partners, forced unions, and (frequently foiled) trysts that sustain their often frantic action. [...] These plays are generally more chaotic, farcical, and risqué than manners comedies; the heroines are more compromised, the heroes less refined and secure, and the endings more morally ambiguous. (Gill 2000: 192)

The sexually hyperactive Woodall engages in various acts of copulation. He not only pleases the mistress and the wife, but also the young servant, who is everything but a virgin, and even sends his own servant to take over the task of bedding the widow Mrs Saintly. He receives unintended help from the two foolish husbands, who both offer to assist in turning the other one into a cuckold. However, the women's jealous reactions and a number of misapprehensions are the reasons why some of his sexual designs fail. Woodall's father Aldo, not recognizing his son, supports Woodall in his sexual designs and even provides him with information of his own lecherous behaviour in his youth. At the end of the play the rake marries Mrs Pleasance, an heiress, whom his father had long intended to be his son's future wife. Mrs Pleasance is described as "a markedly

intelligent virgin who is perfectly aware of [Woodall's] doings" (Roper 367). The clever virgin readily agrees to marriage, although she has no illusions about the rake's lecherous behaviour. This clearly suggests that Woodall's sexual attraction is extremely powerful and almost impossible to resist (Roper 367-368). Woodall's relationship to his destined wife Mrs Pleasance, described as "the only character of some depth" (Roper 369) in the play, clearly expresses an ongoing power struggle. Critics show many different opinions as regards the main focus of the plot. The obscene portrayal of sexual immorality is clearly an issue. It is noted that to a certain extent nudity is shown in the play, when, for example, Woodall's and Tricksy's sexual games are almost discovered in the garden house, or when Woodall pleases Tricksy on his bed, unaware of Mrs Brainsick hiding underneath (Roper 373). The following quote clearly illustrates Woodall's low opinion of a woman's honour and shows the rake's burning sexual desire, which can hardly be resisted by Tricksy.

TRICK . [...] – And with what face shou'd I look upon my Keeper after it?

WOOD . With the same face that all Mistresses look upon theirs. Come, come.

TRICK . But my Reputation!

WOOD . Nay, that's no Argument, if I shou'd be so base to tell; for Women get good fortunes now-a-daies, by losing their Credit, as a cunning Citizen does by Breaking.

TRICK . But I'm so shame-fac'd! Well, I'll go in, and hide my Blushes.

WOOD . I'll not be long after you; for I think I have hidden my Blushes where I shall never find 'em. (2.1.261-268)

Franck Townly and **Ned Ramble** are two of the three rakes in Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* 1681. Interestingly, the comedy was particularly liked by the Whig citizens in the audience, although they are clearly the target of satirical attack (Hume 24). The comedy is not only described as one of the most obscene Carolean comedies, but also as "outstandingly unoriginal" and "careless in minor details of construction and characterization" (Hume 123). The play, however, definitely caters to the audience's tastes and provides funny entertainment. Neither of the two rakes shows characteristics of a true wit. The sexually attractive Townly, for example, is particularly careless of women and turns out to be an alcohol addict who regularly spends his nights in brothels, lying with whores. The reason why his intrigues with women are rather successful might be due to the fact that he always appears at the right place at the right time. Ramble, on the other hand, is an unlucky designer on ladies, whose carefully planned intrigues always fail in the end. His clumsy behaviour illustrates that he is a

fop, or a witwoud, showing rakish characteristics. Townly and Ramble, similar to Horner in *The Country Wife* and Woodall in *The Kind Keeper* do not pursue the women, because they are in love with them, but solely for the sake of cuckolding old self-centred city Whigs, such as Dashwell, Doodle and Wiseacre. The following quote perfectly illustrates their hatred against the old fops and their reasons for cuckolding them.

R A M . Have better thoughts of your Friend; No, she is neither Old nor Ugly, nor one whom Fortune has yet so much blest to put into the state of Widdowhood; she is a Wife, young, plump, pretty, and blooming as the Spring.

T O W N . What is her husband?

R A M B . A Blockheaded City Attorney; a Trudging, Drudging, Cormuging, Petitioning Citizen, that with a little Law and much Knavery has got a great Estate.

T O W N . A Petitioner! Cuckold the Rogue for that very reason.

R A M . By the Inducement of her Parents she Married him against her inclinations, and now nauseating her Husband's bed, rises every Morning by Five or Six, with a pretence to hear Lectures and Sermons, and loathing his Company at home, pretends all day to be at prayers, that she may be alone in her Chamber. (1.1)¹

Townly's and Ramble's lewd behaviour and their not very admirable character traits are certainly not the reasons why the readers side with the rakes. The audience is made to believe that mercenary and hypocritical citizens such as Dashwell and Doodle are the cause of the rakes' pathetic lives.

Another rake-hero who primarily engages in cuckolding for fun and not for love is **Lodwick** in Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* 1678, a "partisan cocktail of Dissenting Whigs, Puritans, hypocrisy, cynicism, and impotence" (Anderson 83). Behn's cynical intrigue comedy addresses sexual and gender misbehaviour and satirically attacks those who want to control the sexual desire of others (Gill 2000: 192). Lodwick seems to have a decent character when he refuses to engage in an amorous play with his future wife Isabella. Interestingly, he interprets his hesitations as signs of impotence and not as his guilty conscience. When he, however, finds out that it is young Lady Fancy offering her passions in the dark chamber, he readily agrees to make love to her and without thinking twice turns the impotent rich Puritan Sir Patient into a cuckold. The only

¹ The online version of *The London Cuckolds* and the printed editions of *Sir Patient Fancy* and *The Spanish Wives* do not provide numbered lines. Quotes from these plays, therefore, only include act and scene number.

reasons why Lodwick does not dare to have sex with Isabella before marriage, is that he would cuckold himself or as he expressed it, he would “cuckold [his] own expectations” (3.4). In the following quote he realizes his chance to cuckold Sir Patient.

L O D W I C K . Hah, – ‘tis not Isabella’s voice,—your husband, say you? (*Takes hold greedily of her hand.*)

L A D Y F A N C Y . Is safe, from any fear of interrupting us. Come—these delays do ill consist with love. And our desires; at least if they are equal.

L O D W I C K . Death, ‘tis the charming mother! What lucky star directed me tonight? Oh, my fair dissembler, let us haste

To pay the mighty tributes due to love. (3.4)

Although young Lodwick betrays Isabella and his friend Wittmore, seduces Lady Fancy and cuckolds Sir Patient, the audience finds it hard to express real contempt for the rake. Hughes (2001) notes that “Lodwick is the play’s chief linguistic manipulator” (106). This means that he “controls the gap between the sign and the signified” (Hughes 2001: 106) much better than all other characters in the play. This shows that he is a real true wit. He mocks and tricks other characters, such as Sir Credulous Easy, and is always in total control of his intrigues, very much in contrast to **Wittmore**, who “bears the significantly royal forename of Charles”, but proves to be “distinctly dim” (Hughes 2001: 100). The hypocrite and hypochondriac Sir Patient makes life hard for Lodwick, since he wants to prevent the rake’s marriage with his daughter Isabella and instead marry her to a wealthy heir. The audience does not blame Lodwick for seducing Lady Fancy, since the latter herself has enjoyed the passionate moments and does not seem to be particularly offended by the deceit.

Wittmore in Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy* 1678 and **Loveday** in Ravenscroft’s *The London Cuckolds* 1681 seem to be truly in love with the women they bed. Sexual intercourse with the wives not only stills their sexual desire, but also functions as a means of revenge on the husbands, who stole their women. Loveday was Eugenia’s former lover and truly in love with her. The audience learns, however, that the couple was tricked by the family and Dashwell in order to prevent their marriage. Whether Wittmore is similarly truly in love with Lady Fancy, or whether he bears the features of a typical young gallant remains unclear. However, he is Lady Fancy’s object of desire and it is primarily for the woman’s sake that the audience sides with the young rake. Wittmore is certainly not a true wit, as he is obviously rather dull at plotting, which he admits when saying “Pox on’t, I’m the dullest dog at plotting, thinking, in the world; I should have

made a damnable ill town poet” (2.1). When he ends up by mistake in Isabella’s chamber he does not notice that it is Sir Patient’s daughter he is addressing in his speech, in contrast to Lodwick, who cleverly realized Lady Fancy’s identity and seized his chance to cuckold Sir Patient. Wittmore, on the other hand, is certainly not triumphant and quite embarrassed in his lustful talk to Isabella (Hughes 2001: 106). Wittmore also finds it difficult to control his passions, since he foams with fury when he listens to Lodwick’s descriptions of his sexual adventures with Lady Fancy, as can be seen in the following quote:

LODWICK. I kissed a thousand times her balmy lips, and greedily took in the nimble sighs she breathed into my soul.
WITTMORE. Oh, I can scarce contain myself. (*Aside*)
SIR CREDULOUS. Pshaw, is that all, Man?
LODWICK. I clasped her lovely body in my arms, And laid my bosom to her panting breast. Trembling she seemed all love and soft desire, And I all burnings in a youthful fire.
SIR CREDULOUS. Bless us, the man’s in a rapture.
WITTMORE. Damnation on them both. (4.1)

The fact that he needs so many attempts in order to succeed in a private meeting with the Lady leads the audience to feel pity for him. Loveday, on the other hand, can be described as a witty figure, since he appears in the disguise of a merchant and waits for the right moment to reveal his true identity. What makes him particularly sympathetic is the fact that he, in contrast to many other rakes, asks Eugenia for whatever part of love she could spare. In order to protect his love, he never gives Dashwell the impression of having made him a cuckold, but quite on the other hand, secretly enjoys his pleasures.

The cuckolding action in Otway’s *The Soldiers’ Fortune* 1680 and Behn’s *The Lucky Chance* 1686 reveal a hidden political power struggle (Chernaik 187). Morgan notes that at the beginning of the 1680s Londoners were more and more confronted with the problems of political instability and economic insecurity. As a result, the theme of penury was frequently addressed in the plays of the period and due to the new roughness of life, brutal farces were preferred over witty comedies. Otway’s farce *The Soldiers’ Fortune* presents the impoverished characters **Captain Beaugard** and his fellow soldier Courtine, “on their beam ends” (Morgan 73). Although Beaugard is impoverished because of the letters of debentures he received from the army instead of regular payment, he still remains an adventurous character. He and his friend Courtine

defend the traditions and values of English aristocracy and desperately try to uphold the chivalric ideal of the old Cavaliers. They believe that an honourable soldier's life is dedicated to the king, even if there is no hope of reward (Warner 113). Another critic notes that the play gives "little more reassurance than that misfortune might possibly be endured" (Owen 2000: 165).

BEAUGARD Do, rail, Courtine, do; it may get thee employment.

COURTINE At you I ought to rail. 'Twas your fault we left our employments abroad to come home, and be loyal, and now we as loyally starve for it.

BEAUGARD Did not thy ancestors do it before thee, man? I tell thee, loyalty and starving are all one. The old Cavaliers got such a trick of it in the king's exile, that their posterity could never thrive since. (1.1.9-16)

Beaugard has not yet given up his hope of survival, which becomes clear right at the play's opening, when he convinces Courtine to find employment with the old voyeuristic and homosexual pimp Sir Jolly Jumble. In order to settle his financial problems and to take revenge on the hypocritical Whigs, now in power, the soldier is willing to exchange sexual services for cash payment. The soldiers, whose true vocation is to serve in the army, now have to face the fact that they are only sexually serving women (Warner 114-115).

Gayman in Behn's *The Lucky Chance*, similar to Beaugard, is a penniless rake, also known as Mr Wasteall. What differentiates him from Beaugard is that he did not lose his money because he served in the war, but because he spent all his fortunes to finance a rakish way of life and to court Julia, Sir Cautious Fulbank's wife, with expensive presents. Both, Gayman and Beaugard are confronted with the fact that their desired women were forced to marry rich citizens for the financial security of their future. The rakes see themselves as rightful husbands and use cuckoldry as a means to take revenge on the foolish husbands. In Gayman's economically determined way of thinking, women function as transferable commodities and units of exchange. Anderson notes that such "economic alienation can produce sexual alienation" (105), which is clearly the case when he is brought into Julia's chamber, and fails to recognize that it is actually her with whom he shares pleasurable moments. Gayman believes that a woman who buys male sexuality must be unable to attract male desire with her looks and thus "[compensate] for what she cannot attract naturally as an object" (Anderson 105). The rake treats Julia as a prostitute when he convinces her husband to set a night with her as

a prize in a gamble. It is essential to note that Gayman's mercenary thinking leads the pathetic rake to act as a prostitute twice in the play. Once, he sells his body for cash to his hideous and disgusting landlady and in another scene he offers sexual favours to a masked woman who provides him with gold. His ignorance and mercenary values are the reasons why he fails to recognize that Julia is his financial and sexual benefactress. Behn, clearly criticizing mercenary values, shows that the treatment of sex as a purely economic transaction turns the handsome Gayman into the victim of his own values and leads to the rake's impoverishment (Chernaik 187). Hume notes that "[i]n a marital discord play the natural resolution is unavailable" (138), and indeed Behn's play does not provide an answer to the problem of forced marriages. The audience's sympathy is certainly not directed towards Gayman, because of his mercenary treatment of Lady Fulbank. It is also not very clear if readers are made to side with the second rake in the play, **Belmour**, a heroic character that is more typical of tragedy. In the following quote Gayman advises Belmour to cuckold Sir Feeble, who forced Leticia into marriage.

GAYMAN. [...] Your damned little jade of a mistress has learned of her neighbours the art of swearing and lying in abundance, and is—
BELMOUR (*sighing*) To be married!
GAYMAN Even so, God save the mark; and she'll be a fair one for many an arrow besides her husband's, though he's an old Finsbury hero this threescore years.
BELMOUR Who mean you?
GAYMAN Why, thy cuckold that shall be, if thou be'st wise.
BELMOUR Away, who is this man? Thou dalliest with me.
GAYMAN Why, an old knight, and alderman here o'th' city, Sir Feeble Fainwould: a jolly old fellow, whose activity is all got into his tongue; a very excellent teaser, but neither youth nor beauty can grind his dudgeon to an edge. (1.1.77-90)

Belmour claims to be desperately in love with Leticia, but when he suspects her of having pleased another man during his absence, he immediately compares her with a whore. When he learns that she was tricked into marriage, he tries to free his rightful wife from the old lecher's hands in order to prevent consummation of their wedding night. It is noteworthy that Belmour cannot tolerate this idea because it would turn himself into a cuckold. The rakes' true love towards the wives remains doubtful, since they do not treat them with honest respect. However, the audience wishes their strategies to succeed since the contemptible husbands truly deserve to be cuckolded.

It is said that Mary Pix's plays very well mirror the changing tastes of the age. Similar to other popular farces of the period, *The Spanish Wives* is a comedy full of lively cuckolding intrigues, with a major satirical attack on the clergy (Steeves xvi-xx). Mary Pix's plays will be treated separately in the course of this study since the period between 1696 and 1706 already saw the rise of sentimental and romantic comedy, as already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

Mary Pix's plays are said to reflect the change from a mainly aristocratic audience into a largely upper middle-class one that showed stricter morality and comprised a greater number of female spectators (Steeves xli-xlii). Moreover, her comedies can be described as dynamic and theatrically effective. It is particularly the implementation of physical humour and the creation of comical situations that Pix's plays are famous for. Additionally, complicated plot lines are typical of the so called Spanish comedy-of-intrigue pattern, which can be found in most of her comedies as well (Rubik 73-75). Cotton evaluates Pix' comedies as "lively intrigue plays full of stage business, bustle, and surprises" (Cotton 119). Moreover, she states that "the dialogue is usually flat, but the action never flags" (119).

The Spanish Wives, for example, is a farcical play that includes a combination of humorous songs, music and dance, as well as various disguises and intrigues, which create a lively and comic effect (Cotton 90-109). The plot in *The Spanish Wives* centres on the kind Governor of Barcelona, who is convinced that giving his wife freedom and liberty will prevent her from adultery. The second plot, a sentimental romance, revolves around the jealous Marquess of Moncada, who forces a harsh treatment upon his wife and keeps her locked up. **Colonel Peregrine** is referred to as the rake, Elenora and her rightful husband **Count Camillus** are described as "true romantics" (Steeves xlv-xlvi), which points towards the early traces of eighteenth-century sentimentalism in the play. Neither Colonel Peregrine, nor Count Camillus can be referred to as truwits or witty tricksters, since it is the servants who plan the intrigues (Steeves xlv-xlvi). Count Camillus wants to rescue his rightful wife Elenora, who was tricked into marriage by the mercenary Marquess de Moncada. The rich Englishman Colonel Peregrine, on the other hand, met the governor's wife by chance. Similar to Wittmore, he is dull at plotting and relies on the beautiful Lady's invention. When discovered by the husband, the Colonel quickly gives up his designs and asks the Governor to be civil to his wife.

Here again, the audience sides with the rakes for the sake of the wives. The following quote shows that he is simply a man trying to seize the opportunity of sleeping with a beautiful woman.

COLONEL. My Lord! you shall command my sword and interest in Barcelona,—yet you must give me leave to mind my own affairs.—I grant your passion more heroic;—for I should scarce accept the Governor's wife for mine, if he would give her:—but I am amorous and eager, as Love and Beauty can inspire hot and vigorous youth. (3.1)

3.2 The cuckolded husband

The term 'cuckold' was a terrible insult and the most disgraceful name by which a husband could be called. Originating from the word 'cuckoo', the bird who lays its eggs in other bird's nests, 'cuckold' refers to a man whose wife is having an affair with another man (Foyster 67). It is worth noting that the act of cuckolding, although often hoped for by the ladies, frequently did not remain a private issue and thus cuckolded husbands became the target of common gossip. In order to signify a husband's loss of honour, society made use of popular rituals such as mocking rhymes and ballads. Another sign that was often used for the representation of cuckoldry was horns, a phallic symbol that represents a man's sexual impotence. As already mentioned in chapter 2.1, cuckolds soon became the centre of attention and the target of public ridicule. Interestingly, it is claimed that the reason behind this tradition of mockery can never be fully explained and that laughter must have been experienced differently depending on the situation. However, it should be noted that laughing at cuckolds did not necessarily mean an expression of disdain or disrespect. It is suggested that laughter must have entailed some sympathy for the cuckold and his situation and that it might have enabled other husbands to forget about their constant unease that they would soon be made cuckolds as well (Foyster 107-114). As illustrated in the following lines, a man's sexual reputation needed to be without question to earn respect by society.

If a man was to have the honour of those below him on the social scale, and the respect of those who were his social equals or betters, then the integrity of his sexual reputation needed to be without question. Without that integrity, no claim to status or prestige within his community could be sustained. (Foyster 121)

To put it differently, in order to be regarded as a respectable man of honour, a husband needed to be sexually potent and thus have absolute control over his wife's sexual life.

If this was not the case, a man was likely to be excluded from the male world, such as Horner in *The Country Wife*, who spreads false rumours about his lack of sexual potency and is therefore permitted to entertain Sir Jaspar Fidget's wife and sister. Restoration drama shows that men who have faith in their male friends are often misled in the end. Sir Patient Fancy, for example, invites Wittmore to his house and thus gives him frequent opportunities to meet his wife. Sir Jaspar Fidget in *The Country Wife* even throws his wife and sister into Horner's arms and begs him to kiss them in the credulous belief that it means a severe punishment for the eunuch. The invitation of male guests to the household could be particularly troublesome to the wife as on the one hand she had to act upon her husband's wishes and remain chaste, but at the same time also needed to delight her guests (Foyster 126-128). In the comedy *The Spanish Wives*, for instance, the Lady Governor first hesitates to act unfaithfully to her husband, but after the Colonel's regular advances, decides to spare some of her love. Of course, the danger of being cuckolded often created intense jealousy in husbands and is therefore a major theme dealt with in Restoration drama. Jealous men are often portrayed as anxious and restless and consequently as weak and volatile in character. Not only Pinchwife in *The Country Wife*, but also the Marquess of Moncada in *The Spanish Wives* is totally obsessed with jealousy and both force a harsh rule upon their young innocent wives. Pinchwife, for instance, is blinded with jealousy and unwittingly drives his wife into Horner's arms by teaching her how to write a proper love letter. The Marquess equally treats his wife in a very cruel way by locking her up in a dark chamber, strictly forbidding her any contact to other people.

Generally speaking, old lechers and mercenary businessmen frequently show foppish behaviour. **Sir Jaspar Fidget**, a nobleman who has turned businessman in *The Country Wife* is too busy to attend to his wife and asks the assumingly impotent Horner to keep her company. Sir Jaspar is merely interested in political business and money and thus unable to recognize his wife's burning sexual desire and her cuckolding designs with Horner. He believes that forcing his wife into the arms of the impotent Horner would not only enable him to rid himself of Lady Fidget, but certainly keep up his reputation and not turn him into a cuckold. In addition, Sir Jaspar receives the satisfaction of taunting a man who had the reputation of being sexually active and powerful, but has now turned supposedly impotent, which can be seen in the following quote.

SIR JAS. So, so; now to mollify, to wheedle him, - *Aside*.

Master Horner will you never keep civil Company, methinks 'tis time now, since you are only fit for them: Come, come, Man you must e'en fall to visiting our Wives, eating at our Tables, drinking Tea with our virtuous Relations after dinner, dealing Cards to'em, reading Plays, and Gazets to'em, picking Fleas out of their shocks for'em, collecting Receipts, New Songs, Women, Pages, and Footmen for'em.

HOR. I hope they'll afford me better employment, Sir.

SIR JAS. Heh, he, he, 'tis fit you know your work before you come into your place; and since you are unprovided of a Lady to flatter, and a good house to eat at, pray frequent mine, and call my Wife Mistriss, and she shall call you Gallant, according to custom. (2.1.601-619)

Sir Jaspar Fidget naively leads his wife directly into the rakes' arms. In order to keep up the pretence, Horner pretends to be upset by Sir Jaspar's obliging behaviour when he says "A Pox, can't you keep your impertinent Wives at home? some men are troubled with the Husbands, but I with the Wives" (4.3.107-109). Horner's remark can be interpreted as a clear warning to husbands who show greater interest in business than in their wives. Men who do not pay enough attention to their spouses are easily deceived and betrayed (Gill 2000: 202-203). The audience sees Sir Jaspar as a stupid character who is duped by the witty Horner. It needs to be noted that Sir Jaspar, however, is not only a fool, but also a malicious man, since all his actions towards the presumably impotent Horner are meant to tease him. Ordering the wives to keep the rake company is meant to constantly remind him of his vanished sexual powers, his lost manhood and lost reputation in society. It is therefore that the audience cannot possibly sympathize with Sir Jaspar Fidget and feels that the title of a cuckold serves him right.

A repeated theme in the comedies is that cuckolds make themselves, which is not only demonstrated by Sir Jaspar Fidget, but also by the country bumpkin **Pinchwife** in *The Country Wife* as well as the alderman **Wiseacre** in Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*. The presumable impotence and weakening authority of the husbands stand in sharp contrast to the "ripe and juicy youthfulness of the mismatched wife and the virility of potential rivals" (Chernaik 186). Pinchwife and Wiseacre see their wives as possessions and refuse to share them with the rest of society. Pinchwife, for example, occasionally keeps his wife locked up at home, which he regards as a safe means of not being made a cuckold. The fanatical jealousy he shows not only results in physical violence against other characters, but is also demonstrated in his language, which contains many images of physical pain and brutality. Pinchwife and Wiseacre share the wrong belief that

keeping a wife ignorant will prevent her infidelity. This is probably the reason why both married a young and naïve girl from the country. However, they are totally misled by this assumption, since Margery Pinchwife steadily accustoms herself to the manners of town women and Peggy, newly married to Wiseacre, naively agrees to the suggestions of a rakish-fop to teach her the ‘real duties’ of a wife, which means nothing less than sexual intercourse. Pinchwife, who is certainly a hypocritical character, thinks he knows the town and Horner’s designs to cuckold him. This shows that Pinchwife must have been a similarly rakish young man in his youth and cuckolded many other citizens, otherwise he would not be so very much afraid of horns being given by Horner. However, he cannot choose the right methods to keep Margery faithful to him and the greater his fear, the more misguided his behaviour becomes (Jantz 95-96). The fact that the elderly Pinchwife and the old alderman Wiseacre married young country-bred girls not older than sixteen years and that they are willing to deny them any form of knowledge and social acquaintance with towns people shows their despicable and cruel nature. It is therefore hardly surprising that the audience can only express contempt and hardly pity these characters. **Dashwell** and **Doodle**, two other witwounds in Ravenscroft’s *The London Cuckolds*, similar to Wiseacre, share the vain belief that their own way of treating their spouses is the best. Both elderly aldermen, however, are pretenders to wit and, therefore, are easily outwitted by their clever wives and successfully cuckolded in the end.

Behn’s social comedy *Sir Patient Fancy* is tightly plotted and shows an impotent, wealthy Puritan in the title role. **Sir Patient Fancy**’s imagined physical sicknesses are linked to those which he believes to be in the state of England, as can be seen in the following quote:

SIR PATIENT. Ah, the house is beset, surrounded, and confounded with profane tinkling, with popish hornpipes and Jesuitical cymbals, more antichristian and abominable than organs or anthems.

[...]

SIR PATIENT. Ay, ‘tis so; call up my servants, and let them be first chastised and then hanged; accuse ‘em for French papishes, that had a design to fire the city, or anything;—oh, I shall die—lead me gently to this bed. (3.7)

Hughes notes that “both follies express themselves in absurd private dialect” (97), which is the frequently used medical jargon and the jargon of the dissenters. The sanctimonious language of dissenters was often satirically attacked in comedy, because it was not only perceived as ridiculous, but also as harmful, since the true meanings of

words were distorted. The characters, particularly Sir Patient, often refer to London in the play. However they do not talk about its public places, parks and gardens, but about the lewd town life and peoples' common behaviour (Hughes 97). Sir Patient complains about the lewd London town life: "Oh London, London, how thou aboundest in iniquity! thy young men are debauched, thy virgins deflowered, and thy matrons all turned bawds!" (2.1). Sir Patient's loveless treatment of his daughters Isabella and Fanny renders him a detestable character. He is willing to force Isabella into marriage purely for financial reasons and his little daughter Fanny, a child of seven years, has already learned to speak the bawdy language of the town. When Fanny refuses to give information about Isabella's secret lover, he threatens to whip her.

SIR PATIENT. Hussy, hussy—I will have thee whipped most unmercifully.
Nurse, fetch me the rod.

FANNY. Oh, pardon me, Sir, this one time, and I'll tell all. (*Kneels.*)—Sir—I have seen him in the garden, but not very often.

SIR PATIENT. Often! Oh, my family's dishonored. Tell me truly what he used to do there, or I will have thee whipped without cessation. Oh, I'm in a cold sweat; there's my fine maid, was he with her long?

FANNY. Long enough. (4.3)

Sir Patient, a "withered sexually barren Puritan" (Hughes 2001: 100), is portrayed as a cruel man without heart. The mentally and physically weak Sir Patient vainly believes that he has absolute authority and power over all other members of the household. His stupidity and egotistical behaviour in combination with his purely mercenary thinking make him particularly loathsome. These are the reasons why he is not only detested and easily tricked by Lady Knowell and Lady Fancy, but also disliked by the audience, who has seen him drunk and pestering his wife for sexual intercourse. It is therefore hardly believable that his final decision to stop his annoying puritan behaviour and become a town gallant is an example of a true reformation of character.

The disgusting old lechers **Sir Cautious Fulbank** and **Sir Feeble Fainwoud** in Behn's *The Lucky Chance* use their power to treat other people as objects, "even though [the old husbands] are satirized as impotent buffoons" (Anderson 102). The men are convinced that everything can be bought, even women, and therefore live in a world of objects. The fact, that Sir Feeble addresses Leticia frequently with "it" in his baby talk, shows that he sees her as his property and not as a human being. He is desperate to bed his newly married wife Leticia, although he has no legitimate rights over her, since he

tricked her into marriage. The illustration of the husbands' behaviour is pointedly described by Anderson as a "sexual and political joke" (103). Sir Feeble's elderly body stands in sharp contrast to his dreadful vitality and regular baby-talk whenever the need for sex overcomes him. Morgan (1981) notes that his childish speech patterns show that he even "[regresses] into nursery smut" (73). This not only weakens his masculine authority, but also gives the worrying impression of father-daughter incest. The fact that Sir Cautious lacks 'courage', undoubtedly points towards his failing sexual powers. The failure of the men's aging and defective bodies is clearly addressed by Julia when teasing Sir Cautious about the future wedding of old Sir Feeble with young Leticia (Anderson 102-103). Julia's remarks, however, remain unnoticed by the self-centred husbands.

SIR CAUTIOUS A prudent man would reserve himself. Goodfacks, I danced so on my wedding day, that when I came to bed, to my shame be it spoken, I fell fast asleep, and slept till morning

LADY FULBANK Where was your wisdom then, Sir Cautious? But I know what a wise woman ought to have done.

SIR FEEBLE Od's bobs, that's wormwood, that's wormwood. I shall have my young hussy set agog too; she'll hear there are better things in the world than she has at home, and then, od's bobs, and then they'll ha't, adod they will, Sir Cautious. Ever while you live, keep a wife ignorant, unless a man be as brisk as his neighbours.

SIR CAUTIOUS A wise man will keep 'em from bawdy christenings then, and gossipings.

SIR FEEBLE Christenings and gossipings! Why, they are the very schools that debauch our wives, as dancing-schools do our daughters.

[...]

LADY FULBANK Wise men, knowing this, should not expose their infirmities, by marrying us young wenches, who, without, instruction, find how we are imposed upon. (2.2.110-138)

The reason why Sir Feeble is so eager to bed his wife is that he believes that "his legal claim to Leticia must be materialized through a sex act" (Anderson 104), which can be seen in the following quote:

BELMOUR. And do you think this marriage lawful Sir?

SIR FEEBLE. Lawful? It shall be when I've had livery and seisin of her body; and that shall be presently, rogue; quick. Besides this, Belmour dares as well be hanged as come into England.

BELMOUR. If he gets his pardon, sir—

SIR FEEBLE Pardon? No, no, I have took care for that, for I have, you must know, got his pardon already.

BELMOUR. How, sir, got his pardon? That's some amends for robbing him of his wife.

SIR FEEBLE. Hold, honest Francis; what, dost think 'twas in kindness to him? [...] (3.1.62-72)

The scene, when Sir Feeble opens his gown and frights away the rest of the servants, reveals a patriarchal authority that lacks sexual powers (Anderson 104). Behn paints a hilariously comic, but also slightly disturbing, picture of gloating and drinking old lechers who are easily frightened by rumours of robbery or servants disguised under sheets, and even “dangerous in their unease” (Morgan 73). As regards the gambling scene, it is the male characters Gayman, Sir Cautious and Sir Feeble who are satirically attacked. All three men engage in plot against Julia and regard her as a commodity when setting a night with her as the prize of the game. Sir Cautious, an absolute materialist and mercenary banker, would rather make his wife a prostitute than lose some of his money (Chernaik 187-188). Sir Cautious does not worry about being cuckolded, since he wins 300 Pounds from Gayman: “Three hundred pounds for a night! Why, what a lavish whore-master's this: we take money to marry our wives, but very seldom part with 'em, and by the bargain get the money” (4.1.401-404).

Both decrepit men give up power easily in the end. It is worth mentioning, however, that Sir Cautious keeps control until the end and treats Julia as part of his property, when saying “[...] and if I die, sir, I bequeath my lady to you, with my whole estate: my nephew has too much already for a fool” (5.7.181-184). Behn, illustrating the imprisonment of women in marriages, treats the motif of mercenary thinking similar to other male playwrights, in that “those with ‘blunted Weapons’, physical or mental, will come out second-best” (Chernaik 187; 202)

Sir Davy Dunce in Thomas Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune* is presumably impotent, old and grasping, as already suggested by his very name. He is clearly the complete opposite of a handsome man: constantly chewing tobacco, eating garlic and avoiding clean linen. Warner describes his foolish character as “a lampoon of the bourgeois Whig merchant who sees an opportunity to become powerful—and rich—in the new City Party” (115). Munns (1995), similarly, sees him as “an elderly and sexually perverse city knight” (70). He is certainly not a very bright character and might even be described as slightly senile, which is clearly a result of his old age, as his repetitive and absent-minded speech shows. What makes matters worse is that his superficial political

thinking is merely based upon prejudices. He is afraid of Jesuits, whom he supposes to spy on the country. Similar to Sir Cautious in Behn's *The Lucky Chance* he is a mercenary old Whig who constantly thinks about methods to increase his wealth. The mean-minded man even hires Bloody-Bones, a presumed murderer, to get rid of Beaugard, but when he learns that this would cost him 200 Pounds, he quickly re-decides to hire him for just beating the soldier, which is only half the price. His cowardice is funnily expressed in the scene when he meets Bloody-Bones, who is in fact Beaugard's servant in disguise, in person (Warner 115-116).

SIR DAVY Ay, 'murdered' I say, sir—his face flayed off and nailed to a post in my great hall in the country, amongst all the other trophies of wild beasts slain by our family since the Conquest. There's never a whoremaster's head there yet.

[...]

FOURBIN. Truly, Sir David, if, as you say, the man must be well murdered without any remorse or mercy, betwixt Turk and Jew it is honestly worth two hundred pounds.

SIR DAVY Two hundred pounds! Why, I'll have a physician shall kill a whole family for half the money.

BLOODY BONES Damme, sir, how do ye mean?

SIR DAVY Damme, sir, ho do I mean? Damme, sir, not to part with my money. (4.1.208-211;299-303)

The most original character in the play is clearly Sir Jolly Jumble, an old voyeuristic whoremaster, lusting after young men. Sir Jolly embodies "sexual opportunism", whereas Sir Davy stands for "political and financial opportunism" (Warner 117), and since marriage is understood to belong to the latter type, Beaugard decides to side with the pimp and pretend his own death in order to cuckold Sir Davy (Warner 117). In the end, Sir Davy learns that he has been turned into a cuckold and is blackmailed into accepting Beaugard's continuing sexual affair with his wife. The following quote not only brilliantly describes Sir Davy's egotistical character, for which the audience can only but express contempt, but also refers to those of other cuckolded husbands, such as Sir Cautious Fulbank or Sir Patient Fancy.

His Puritanical pretensions of religion and honor combine with a sly treachery born of cowardice and miserliness, to make him a perfect emblem of middle-class depravity. (Warner 118)

Limberham and Brainsick, the two old fools in Dryden's *The Kind Keeper*, are cuckolded by Woodall. They obviously cannot bear the sight of each other, and both ask

Woodall to turn the other one into a cuckold. Of course, neither of them is spared the fate and both wear horns in the end. Limberham, his name is taken from the *The Country Wife*, is the keeper of young Tricksy and, as Hume notes, very much abused and satirically attacked in the play. He excuses himself for premature ejaculation, he is much too afraid of discovering Tricksy's rather obvious adulterous affairs, and more or less forced by Woodall to exchange keeping for marriage in the end (Hume 330), upon which Woodall remarks: "A most excellent Reformation, and at a most seasonable time! The Moral on't is pleasant, if well consider'd" (5.1.613-614). Brainsick is a self-centred witwoud and particularly proud of his intelligent and learned conversation, which is in fact nothing but complete nonsense. Brainsick's frequent misuse of foreign words, and his affinity for French are typical characteristics of a fop. He does not at all care about his wife's company and sexual life, and therefore is easily tricked by Woodall into guarding the door, while the rake sexually pleases his wife. Brainsick is even too stupid to realize that he wears horns in the end. The following quote shows his cold behaviour and contempt for his wife.

BRAIN. I nauseate these foolish Feats of Love.

MRS. BRAIN. Nay, but why shou'd he be so fretful now? and knows I doat on him; to leave a poor Dear so long without him, and then come home in an angry humour! Indeed I'll ky.

BRAIN. Prythee leave thy fulsom fondness; I have surfeited on Conjugal Embraces. (3.1.187-192)

The Governor of Barcelona and the Marquess de Moncada, two husbands in Mary Pix's *The Spanish Wives* represent two very opposing attitudes towards women. The Marquess of Moncada, an exaggerated version of Pinchwife, keeps his wife locked up whereas the Governor treats his wife generously. The Governor of Barcelona is familiar with different social customs since he has made a number of journeys in England and Europe. He hopes that the great freedom and liberty he grants his wife will keep her faithful and loyal to him. This liberal treatment, however, is very unusual for traditional Spanish customs, which enforced a very harsh rule over wives. The couple's droll sense of humour is particularly expressed in their way of addressing each other. He calls her Tittup and she addresses him with Deary. The Marquess, clearly expressing his disapproval of the Governor's generous treatment of his spouse, locks his wife up and denies her freedom and contact to other people. He has married Elenora solely for her fortune, since he is more afraid of losing her money, than of losing her as a person, when saying "Oh, I am ruined, blown up, undone! [...] I lose her, and what I value

more, her large fortune” (3.2). The Marquess is finally outwitted and his wife is brought to her beloved Camillus (Steeves xix). The old governor speaks the last lines in the play “Like you, here stands a happy man; And I’ll keep my Tittup,—that is, if I can” (Pix 182). Pix clearly recommends the Governor’s liberal and generous way of treating his wife. The play, “a bustling comedy of intrigue” (Morgan 45), shows that tyranny and meanness will eventually lead to women’s adulterous acts, whereas kindness and liberty might keep them loyal (Bush-Bailey 145). The Governor, however, certainly doubts that his kindness will guarantee his wife’s loyalty, when he says: “Like you, here stands a happy man; And I’ll keep my Tittup,—that is, if I can” (3.6).

3.3 The adulterous wife

Generally speaking, Restoration comedy shows a variety of female character types, as for example, the female romantic lead and her close friend and confidante. The female lead, as it is claimed, can be described as “prominent and active” (Hume 133) or “in the background as an object” (Hume 133). When it comes to values and beliefs, she is either “a witty jillflirt or a serious moralist” (Hume 133). A solitary female, as Hume explains, is a rarity in Restoration plays. Other female characters are, for instance, the scheming maid; the heavy mother or strict governess; the mistress; the cast mistress; the whore; the amorous, usually older woman; the ingénue (a young innocent girl) and the abused wife (Hume 132-133). This fine distinction, however, is of little use for the following analysis of the adulterous wife, as many of them are female leads falling into the category of “witty jillflirts” (Hume 133). Therefore, the wife’s relationships to the rake-hero, which is either portrayed as the rightful husband or a lusty stranger, will be used as a primary means of categorizing the different characters. Moreover, the wife’s age and class background, the reasons for marriage and relationship to the husband will be outlined. The latter already hints at the reasons of adultery, which will be explained more thoroughly in one of the following chapters called “The wives’ reasons for cuckolding”.

Lady Dunce in Otway’s *The Soldiers’ Fortune*, Eugenia in Ravenscroft’s *The London Cuckolds*, Lady Fancy in Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy*, Lady Fulbank and Leticia in Behn’s *The Lucky Chance*, as well as Elenora in Pix’s *The Spanish Wives* were separated from their beloved men and either tricked or forced into a marriage with a foolish, wealthy old husband. By portraying a wife’s imprisonment in a forced marriage, playwrights

illustrated a problem which was “at once legal, cultural, and psychological” (Anderson 69). Therefore, the following analysis will particularly focus on the wife’s role within marriage and society and the way she is treated by the husband and the rake. It will also show whether the men regard her as a self-governing individual or more as an exchangeable commodity.

Chernaik notes that a rebellious act by a miserably married wife against patriarchal authority is treated with greater uncertainty in the comedies than the rebellion of a young virgin. This is particularly the case if the wife’s infidelity and the cheating of the husband are involved, since an adulterous act meant a threat to male inheritance (Chernaik 186). Planned infidelity is more frequent than actual adulterous acts in plays by Restoration dramatists. This is as also true for many of Behn’s plays, though in *The Lucky Chance* and *Sir Patient Fancy* adulterous relationships do form an important part of the action (Chernaik 203). In these comedies Behn addresses the issues of women’s sexual desire, their treatment as objects and their imprisonment in forced marriages (Bush-Bailey 68). The sexual-political debate becomes immediate when plays are acted out by actresses on the stage and judged by the audience, which consisted of a significant number of female spectators (Bush-Bailey 69). It is worth noting that mock marriages as, for example, in Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, were popular means in Restoration comedies, but not common in the life of the Restoration period (Hume 136-137).

Gill (2000) claims that Behn disdainfully illustrates the imprudent behaviour of fops, old lechers and Whigs, but her main focus lies on forced marriages and marriages for financial reasons, which commonly drive the plots and the action of her comedies (193).

Lady Fancy, also referred to as Lucia in Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy*, is an imprisoned wife in a loveless marriage and by means of adultery she liberates herself from this state. While a wife’s infidelity is always uncomplicated entertainment for the rake, it often means humiliation or dishonour for the woman. Lady Fancy, for example, becomes the sexual victim of Lodwick, who only by mistake ends up in her chamber. Believing it is her lover Wittmore, Lady Fancy engages in sexual intercourse with the rake Lodwick, who is clearly aware of her identity. In the end, however, Lucia ends up with everything she hoped for, that is, in the arms of her lover Wittmore and with her

husband's riches. On top of that, Sir Patient even reveals his sudden insight into his nasty character and decides to reform (Hughes 2001: 105). However, Sir Patient's unexpected change when saying "I could even approve of monarchy and church-discipline, I'm so truly convinced I have been a beast and an ass all my life" (5.1) is unlikely to be true. Behn, however, neither provides a clear solution to this ménage à trois, nor gives an outlook to the young couple's future. Hughes (2001) notes that "Lady Fancy is portrayed with the sympathy Behn always reserved for women in a loveless marriage" (97). It is essential to note that it is less Lucia's character, but more her miserable situation that creates sympathy for her. When Lady Fancy, for example, believes her husband to be dead she says to Wittmore: "[...] I now having no more to do but to bury the stinking corpse of my quondam cuckold, dismiss his daughters, and give thee quiet possession of all" (5.1). This statement obviously does not render her admirable. However, the audience is clearly made to side with Lady Fancy when she describes her miserable life as a sexual object for old lechers in the following quote.

LADY FANCY. Judge what a fine life I lead the while, to be set up with an old, formal, doting, sick husband, and a herd of snivelling, grinning hypocrites, that call themselves the teaching saints; who, under pretence of securing me to the number of their flock, do so sneer upon me, pat my breasts, and cry fie, fie upon this fashion of tempting nakedness. (2.1)

Anderson states that Behn's comedies make a request for "modified female libertinism" (69) and that the women in her plays are "active objects who try to teach their lovers this libertine lesson through comic events" (69). Gill points out that the women in Behn's harsh comedies "prove sexually desirable and desiring" and that "their virtue lies in their faithfulness to their lover, not in their chastity" (Gill 2000: 194). Plays such as *Sir Patient Fancy* as well as *The Lucky Chance* clearly illustrate the problem of mismatched marriages and the woman's contending needs for love and money. The wives, such as Lady Fancy or Lady Fulbank, are neither portrayed as corrupted, nor are they criticized for choosing financial security over love. What justifies Lady Fancy's and Lady Fulbank's dishonest behaviour is that it is based on real love to the rakes (Gill 2000: 194).

The description of **Leticia** and **Lady Fulbank** in the cast list of Behn's *The Lucky Chance* is particularly interesting (Bush-Bailey 68). Leticia is described in the list as young and virginal, which is certainly true, and Lady Fulbank, also referred as Julia, is

described as honest and generous. Without question Julia acts generously towards Gayman when she provides him with her husband's money, but whether she is also an honest woman remains doubtful. The two parallel plots in Behn's *The Lucky Chance*, "a cheerful city marriage farce, full of tricks, intrigue, and mock ghosts" (Hume 369), revolve around the young wives Lady Fulbank and Leticia. **Julia**, now Lady Fulbank, has already married Sir Cautious when the comedy opens. The decision to marry the old knight instead of her impoverished lover Gayman shows that she chose financial security over true love. **Leticia**, on the other hand, is robbed of her free choice and tricked into marriage by Sir Feeble Fainwould, who kept her true love Belmour abroad and spread rumours of his death in Belgium. The following quote shows how much she detests the idea of marrying Sir Feeble.

LETICIA (*aside*) I die but to imagine it; would I were dead indeed.
SIR FEEBLE Ha, hum, how's this? Tears upon your wedding-day? Why, why, you baggage you, ye little thing, fool's-face! Away, you rogue, you're naughty, you're naughty. (*Patting, and playing, and following her*)
[...]
LETICIA (*aside*) Heavens, what a nauseous thing is an old man turned lover.
(1.3.22-26; 56-57)

In this tricked marriage, it is now that sexual intercourse with the husband is the adulterous action, whereas adulterous sex with the rake and rightful husband Belmour becomes innocent. The sexual act with Leticia is clearly defined in terms of ownership by both, the old lecher and the young rake (Chernaik 189-190). Lady Fulbank is also unhappily married and complains about the terrible consequences of her decision to wed Sir Cautious for financial security.

LADY FULBANK Oh, how fatal are forced marriages!
How many ruins one such match pulls on:
Had I but kept my sacred vows to Gayman,
How happy had I been, how prosperous he!
Whilst now I languish in a loathed embrace,
Pine out my life with age, consumptuous coughs. (1.2.32-37)

Gill explains that "the unhappy, mismatched alliances serve as gentle rebukes to any who would forfeit true love for financial gain" (Gill 2000: 193). The cuckolding tricks in Behn's play present an immoral world in which hidden pleasures serve as a means to endure unchangeable situations. As in many of Behn's plays, material needs and sexual desire always seem to contradict each other as the former can only be satisfied by the husband and the latter solely by the rake. Lady Fulbank is not punished for her actions

in the end, since she cuckolds for true love (Gill 2000: 193-194). Julia, who is treated like a piece of ware that serves as a prize in a gamble, is tricked into sexual intercourse with Gayman. She initially accuses both tricksters for treating her as a prostitute, but finally resolves only to blame her husband. In the following quote she complains about being passed on as an object from one man to the next. “And must my honour be the price of it? [...] What, make me a base prostitute, a foul adulteress?” (5.7.20-22). She receives the sympathies of the audience, not only for her outspokenness but also for her generally uncorrupted behaviour and witty reactions. With regard to the latter, Julia is definitely a truemwit and much wittier than Gayman. Her creativity and spontaneous actions, her independence, courage and determination are some of the reasons why the audience sympathizes with her throughout the play (Chernaik 188-189). Hume claims that both Julia and Leticia are still virgins when he says “But betting—successfully—on a night with a still-virgin wife is decidedly *risqué*, and the Ladies seem to have raised quite a fuss over it” (Hume 369). The assumption that Julia is still a virgin is unlikely to be true, since it is clear to the audience that she pleased Gayman in disguise, although the rake did not recognize her as his beautiful benefactress. Critics have noted that Behn does not provide a formal closure to the play and therefore Julia’s fate is left open (Anderson 106). The play shows that women have rightful sexual desires, “without which there is no comic ending” (Anderson 108). Behn also portrays an upcoming “bourgeois economic order” (Anderson 108) that requires women to be both, chaste and sexually objective. The ending shows that control and imprisonment can only end in unhappy marriages.

The bitter, sardonic cynicism in Otway’s “amusing, unpleasant and serious” (Hume 354) comedy *The Soldiers’ Fortune* creates an effective atmosphere. Bitter attacks on the obscene play were refuted by Otway himself, wittily claiming that no true lady would be so familiar with obscenity in order to recognize it. **Lady Duncce**, the former love of Captain Beaugard, was forced to marry the rich old cit Sir Davy for financial reasons during the soldier’s absence. Beaugard, now penniless as the army disbanded, takes revenge and cuckolds Sir Davy, who is blackmailed by the young lovers and accepts his horns in the end. Lady Duncce’s adulterous actions are certainly not glamorized, as J. H. Smith notes (qtd. in Hume 354). The fact that in the Restoration period young women often had to marry for money shows that Lady Duncce’s situation is clearly “more than a specious excuse for adultery” (Hume 354). The witty lady makes

use of a standard trick that is typical of Restoration comedies. By telling her husband to warn Beaugard off, she arranges for appointments with the rake (Hume 118). When Beaugard meets her the first time in person, he finds out that she is the young beautiful Clarinda, the woman he had been courting before he fought in the army. He first believes that her advances are only meant to fool him, but soon learns that the target of mockery is actually her husband, Sir Davy (Warner 115). It seems that her marriage has shattered all her dreams and hopes. In the following quote she describes her marriage with the ugly fool Sir Davy, which arouses the audience's sympathy for her miserable situation.

LADY DUNCE Then, for his person, 'tis incomparably odious. He has such a breath, one kiss of him were enough to cure the fits of the mother. 'Tis worse than asafoetida.

SYLVIA O hideous!

[...]

LADY DUNCE He is one of those fools, forsooth, that are led by the nose by knaves to rail against the king and the government, and is mightily fond of being thought of a party. I have had hopes this twelvemonth to have heard of his being in the Gate-House for treason.

SYLVIA But I find only yourself the prisoner all this while.

LADY DUNCE At present indeed I am so. But fortune, I hope, will smile, wouldst thou but be my friend, Sylvia (1.2.35-38; 72-79)

Beaugard's and Lady Duncce's first cuckolding attempt is prevented by Sir Davy, who returned home unexpectedly. Lady Duncce takes hold of Beaugard's sword and offers her husband the weapon in order to stab her. "No, I'll die, to be revenged on myself. I ne'er can hope that I may see his streaming gore; and thus I let out my own" (3.2.75-76). Here it is interesting to note that a man's weapon is transferred into a woman's hands. Her clear knowledge of Sir Davy's cowardly reaction creates a moment of ridiculing male power and authority rather than enforcing this power (Munns 1995: 61).

Eugenia in Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* and **Elenora** in Mary Pix's *The Spanish Wives* were both tricked into marriage. Eugenia is blindly trusted by her husband Dashwell, who regards her as a zealous and pious wife. Her prayers, however, serve as a means to get rid of the blockhead, who forced her into matrimony. As expressed by Loveday in the following quote, marriage made Eugenia the sole property of her husband.

EUG. Alas! They told me you were dead, and I heard it several times confirm'd.
LOVE. That was our Parents plot to divide our affections. They writ the same to me of you.
EUG. Had I known you were living—
LOVE. Well, *Eugenia*, say no more of that. I come now to play an after-game, though you are married, and your person is your husband's, I claim a share in your affections, since wholly I cannot enjoy you, allow me what part you can. [...]
EUG. I confess I once lov'd you, nor had my affections ever abated, but from report of your death; the sight of you revives them agen—be you discreet, and I cannot be unkind! (4.2)

Elenora in *The Spanish Wives* is treated like a prisoner and locked up in chamber by the cruel Marquess. The wife and her maid show strong female bonding, when tormenting the husband and organizing help for an escape. Although she is imprisoned and terrorized, her speech, as illustrated in the following quote, shows a strong and confident voice. The young woman knows exactly what to say in order to drive her husband crazy with obsessive jealousy. It becomes clear that it is only her body that is imprisoned, and not her thoughts and voice. The audience feels sorry for Elenora's horrible fate and is thus made to side with the woman.

MARQ. You are a perpetual plague to me, I'm sure—You hate everybody that tells you your duty.
EL. Inhuman Spaniard!—what wouldst thou have?—Am I not immured, buried alive?
MARQ. Yes, yes; I have your body, but your heart is with the young Count Camillus. D'ye blush, ye strumpet, in imagination?—Ye Eve! Dalilah! Devil! I'll let out that bounding blood.—Orada—get a surgeon to take away fifty ounces. [...]
EL. Monster! be thyself the butcher, and let my heart's blood out: That gentleman you named has honor, truth, and virtue.
MARQ. Thou lyest, false woman! he's a rake, a hellhound, and wallowing now in Rome's brothels. [...]
EL. Know this, and let it gnaw thy jealous heart: Thy visits will be my severest punishment. (2.1)

Mrs Brainsick and Tricksy in Dryden's *The Kind Keeper*, Lady Fidget and Margery Pinchwife in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, Peggy and Arabella in Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* as well as The Governor's Lady in Pix's *The Spanish Wives* engage in adulterous affairs with handsome and sexually powerful young rakes who are not their rightful husbands, but lusty strangers.

Gill explains that comedies of manners generally portray three types of women. **Lady Fidget** and **the virtuous gang** in *The Country Wife*, for example, are “sexually active hypocrites who scheme, betray, entrap, and deceive”. **Margery Pinchwife**, quite the opposite, certainly falls into the category of “naive or ignorant young women who seem potentially amendable to seduction”. Thirdly, there are “charming virgins who possess wealth and wit”, like Alithea, Margery’s sister in law (Gill 2000 194). Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang are portrayed as women with a naturally debased character, who are linguistically deceiving their husbands in a rakish manner. Lady Fidget, a passionate elderly woman, argues that infidelity with a private citizen is not unlawful. A man who is not of noble birth and therefore not a gentleman cannot damage a woman’s honour. In this way of thinking, Lady Fidget’s aristocratic status negates adultery with a common man (Gill 2000: 1999).

LADY FIDGET She says true, ‘tis an errant shame Women of quality shou’d be so slighted; methinks, birth, birth, shou’d go for something; I have known Men admired, courted, and followed for their titles only. (2.1.439-443)

[...]

LADY FIDGET “But still ‘tis an erranter shame for a Noble Person, to neglect her own honour, and defame her own Noble Person, with little inconsiderable Fellows, foh! – (2.1.463-466)

[...]

LADY FIDGET You say true; y faith I think you are in the right on’t: ‘tis not an injury to a Husband, till it be an injury to our honours; so that a Woman of honour looses no honour with a private Person; and to say truth– (2.1.481-485)

Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang interpret the term honour in a very self-righteous and dishonest way. They frequently use the word, but hardly ever address its real meaning. This shows that Lady Fidget and the rest of the virtuous gang change the meaning of words for their own benefit. Their inventiveness in the manipulation of language is thoroughly satirized in the play. Gill notes that “the sexual bravado and amorous guile of rake-heroes become sexual rapaciousness and hypocrisy in women” (Gill 2000: 199).

The ingénue Margery Pinchwife represents the complete opposite to the “bored, worldly-wise city wife” Lady Fidget, who is only “looking for adulterous amusement” (Corman 60). Margery, an initially innocent country-bred girl of sixteen years, is certainly not a naturally debased woman such as Lady Fidget. She is simply touched by Horner’s delightful advances and consequently falls in love with the handsome rake.

The inept treatment of her jealous husband Pinchwife leads her directly into Horner's bed. In the end she is naively determined to marry Horner and substitute him for her present husband. However, she has to face the fact that divorce is not possible and that she needs to stay with Pinchwife and return with him to the country (Corman 60). Everything Margery does is spontaneous and she often seems to avoid disaster by last-minute action (Chadwick 111-115). It is worth mentioning that various authors interpret Margery's character differently. Some describe her as naïve and rather childlike, others, however, see her as a potential member of the virtuous gang. Wilkinson, on the other hand, notes that Margery is in fact well on the way to becoming a wit, and that in Restoration terms it could even be Margery who illustrates the right way (Wilkinson 137). Wilkinson's interpretation seems rather unlikely to be true. If Margery had possessed the traits of a witty heroine, she would not have acted in such a lewd way throughout the play, and quite clearly not have naïvely insisted on Horner becoming her second husband at the end of the comedy. Margery's relation to Pinchwife is quite interesting, since she was not forced into marriage with him. Although the husband's fanatical jealousy leads him to shout at his young wife and threaten her with punishment, Margery still loves the old grumpy man. When she is angry with him, it is only because he forbids her to experience the famous town life.

MR. PIN. Nay, if she be so innocent as to own to me her liking them, there is no hurt in't – *Aside*.

Come my poor Rogue, but thou lik'st none better then me.

MRS. PIN. Yes indeed, but I do, the Player Men are finer Folks.

MR. PIN. But you love none better then me?

MRS. PIN. You are mine own Dear Bud, and I know you, I hate a Stranger.

[...]

MR. PIN. Ha – Mrs. Minx, ask me no more to go to a Play.

MRS. PIN. Nay, why, Love? I did not care for going; but when you forbid me, you make me as't were desire it.

ALITH. So 'twill be in other things, I warrant. (2.1.85-94; 115-120)

Munns (2000) explains that in Restoration comedies “the country is the site of exile and rural tedium” (148). This explains why Margery is so fascinated by town life and the interesting surprises it bears for her. When sleeping with Horner, she does not primarily want to betray Pinchwife, but naively enjoys the pleasures the presumably impotent Pinchwife cannot give her.

Peggy in Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*, similar to Margery Pinchwife, is a young and innocent country-bred girl of 14 years. She is, however, given much less space in the play than Margery and, in contrast to the latter, *forced* to marry her uncle Wiseacre, an alderman of London. Portrayed as rather naïve and innocent, she follows her cruel husband's instructions to guard him with a sword at night and by day to rest next to his nightcap. Like Margery, Peggy takes everything literally and has no idea about town life at all. By chance, Ramble appears in her chamber and offers to teach her the 'real duties' of a wife. She eagerly agrees and without actually knowing it, turns her husband into a cuckold. Peggy's childlike innocence and literal understanding of Ramble's advances are portrayed in the following lines.

RAM. Thy Innocence has reach'd my heart.—oh!—
PEG. Indeed I ha'n't done you no harm, not I.
RAM. Thou art insensible of the wound thy eyes have made.
PEG. Wound! Oh dear, why you don't bleed.
RAM. Oh, 'tis inwardly!
PEG. Aunt, I warrant you one of your pins has scratch'd him.
AUNT. Break from him, or he'll bewitch thee.
PEG. No, no, forsooth Aunt, he's no old Woman. (2.2)

Arabella represents the total opposite of Peggy in *The London Cuckolds*. She is an experienced city woman, who possesses wit and self-confidence. It seems that Arabella generally does not find it difficult to spend pleasurable hours with young men, as on the one hand, her husband naïvely trusts her wit and on the other, her maid Engine readily arranges for the company of potential lovers. Interestingly, Arabella not only uses her wit to trick her husband and please herself, but also to help Peggy. Showing female solidarity, Arabella and her maid Engine decide to teach the poor girl the pleasures of town life and thus turn her husband Wiseacre into a cuckold. In the following passage, Engine beautifully illustrates the profession of a Lady's woman, which is, according to her, similar to that of a pimp. As the language is more civilized and refined than in the past, cuckolding becomes a more practicable thing for the maids and the wives.

ENG. [...] well this is a profitable profession, and in us that wait on Lady's the scandal is hid under the name of Confident or Woman: I would sooner choose to be some rich Lady's woman than many a poor Lord's Wife. This imployment was formerly stil'd Bawding and Pimping—but our Age is more civiliz'd – and our Language much refin'd—it is now a modish piece of service onely, and said, being complaisant, or doing a friend a kind office. Whore—(oh filthy broad word!) is now prettily call'd Mistress; Pimp, Friend,—

Cuckold-maker, Gallant: thus the terms being civiliz'd the thing becomes more practicable,—what Clowns they were in former Ages—Hark!- (3.1)

Mrs Tricksy and **Mrs Brainsick** in Dryden's *The Kind Keeper*, very similar to Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang in *The Country Wife*, know that they are rivals as regards the rake Woodall. Tricksy, Limberham's penniless mistress, enjoys sexual intercourse with Woodall when Mrs Brainsick, hidden under the bed, interrupts them with pinches. Hume notes that Dryden "blatantly imitates Wycherley's 'china' scene and presents far more sex in a blunter way than Wycherley ever attempted" (Hume 331). In contrast to *The Country Wife*, the audience is made to feel contempt for the sexual behaviour of all the characters (Hume 141). Tricksy's name refers to the fact that, although she is young and inexperienced in marriage, she already knows how to deceive and cuckold her keeper. Tricksy comes from a lower class background and was forced to become the mistress of an old keeper. In Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*, produced in the same year as Dryden's comedy, the following interesting remark on keeping is made.

ISABELLA [...] for of all fops your country fop is the most tolerable animal; those of the town are the most unmanageable bests in nature.

LUCRETIA And are the most noisy, keeping fops.

ISABELLA Keeping begins to be as ridiculous as matrimony, and is a greater imposition upon the liberty of man; the insolence and expense of their mistresses has almost tired out all but the old and doting part of mankind. (1.1)

Marriage is Tricksy's only possibility to financially secure her future living and to rise in class. The young woman often complains about Limberham's old age, his foolishness and bad habits. It is obvious that Tricksy does not stay with him for reasons of love or admiration, but simply because of his wealth and foolishness. With regard to virtue, it is obvious that Tricksy does not possess a great amount of it. Her greatest strength is most likely that she knows exactly how Limberham reacts in certain situations. Straightforward in her expressions, the young mistress finds it difficult to control her passions and therefore is involved in a quarrel with Limberham. In the following passage she accuses him of not granting her enough money.

TRICK. Hang your pitiful excuses 'Tis well known what offers I have had, and what fortunes I might have made with others, like a fool as I was, to throw away my youth and Beauty upon you. I could have had a young handsome Lord, that offer'd me my Coach and six; besides many a good Knight and Gentleman, that wou'd have parted with their own Ladies, and have settled half they had upon me.

LIMB. I, you said so.

TRICK. I said so, Sir! who am I? is not my word as good as yours?

LIMB. As mine, Gentlewoman? tho I say it, my word will go for thousands.

TRICK. The more shame for you, that you have done no more for me: But I am resolv'd I'll not lose my time with you; I'll part.

LIMB. Do, who cares? Go to *Dog and Bitch-Yard*, and help your Mother to make Footmens Shirts.

TRICK. I defy you, Slanderer, I defy you. (2.1.95-110)

Mrs Brainsick shares Tricksy's fate in being bound to a stupid husband, but what makes matters worse, the old man even despises her. When Saintly, a hypocritical landlady desiring Woodall, discovers the two wives in the rake's chamber, Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick work together in defending their virtue and reputation. In this precarious situation, the two women show female bonding when threatening to testify against Saintly. It is worth noting that Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick only act out of self-interest and only show solidarity in order to secure their own reputation. They are rivals in love matters and therefore Tricksy is rather pleased to hear Woodall depicting Mrs Brainsick as "the peaking Creature" (2.1.226) and describing her legs as "[P]illars, gross enough to support a larger building;" (2.1.234-235), although she very well knows that her rival is a real beauty and the exact opposite of his descriptions. Mrs Brainsick is granted less space than Tricksy in the comedy, and interestingly, she is also not as forthright in teasing her husband. The reason might be that Mrs Brainsick is already a married woman and therefore needs to be particularly careful about maintaining a fine reputation. In the following quote she tells Woodall about her ill-humoured husband, but shortly before making love to the rake, they are interrupted by the husband.

MRS. BRAIN. [...] Besides, he thinks me such a Fool, that I cou'd half resolve to revenge my self, in justification of my Wit.

WOOD. Come, come, no half resolutions among Lovers; I'll hear no more of him, till I have reveng'd you fully. Go out, and watch *Judith*. [Exit Judith]

MRS. BRAIN. Yet, I cou'd say, in my defence, that my Friends married me to him against my will.

WOOD. Then let us put your Friends too, into the Quarrel: it shall go hard, but I'll give you a Revenge for them. (3.1.158-166)

Mary Pix's **The Governors' Lady** in *The Spanish Wives* enjoys the greatest freedom of all the wives analysed in this study. The comedy's main theme is that "despotism and cruelty" sooner or later lead to adulterous acts whereas "freedom and generosity" keep a wife loyal (Bush-Bailey 145). The Governor's wife flirts with Colonel Peregrine and hesitates before she finally gives in to his advances. Her waiting woman Spywell assists

the Lady in her attempts to deceive the husband. The Governor's Lady justifies her decision by saying "Where's the harm to give a worthy begging stranger a little charity from a love's store, when the kind old Governor can never never miss it?" (1.1). Her attempted adulterous act is prevented by her husband and when he accuses her of intended infidelity, she cunningly responds by claiming she knew it was him, testing his faithfulness. The Lady's threats of hanging herself in her own garters serve as a clever means to manipulate her husband. Terribly afraid of losing her, he immediately grants her the right to rule over him again. In the quotation below, the Lady Governor, totally aware of her husband overhearing her conversation with the Colonel, explains her furious reaction against any rake's impertinent advances. It can be argued that this proves her to be a rather hypocritical character, quite similar to Lady Fancy.

COL. –Chaster in their thoughts than your nuns, yet marrier: more frolicsome than your carnivals.

LADY. Very pleasant! Just so I would live,—yet if a bold encouraged wretch once offered at my honour, I would not stay to use my husband's sword,—but with my own hands stab the vile presumer. (1.3)

In the end she is touched by her husband's generosity and promises to refuse the Colonels advances by saying "Truly, Deary, if the Colonel is there, you shall hear me charge him, never to see me more." (3.5).

To sum up, all of the wives portrayed above, except the Governor's lady and Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang, attract the audience's sympathy. Their adulterous liaisons are without doubt rebellious acts against the dominating patriarchal authority and the sexual moral double standard of the period. The wives are in general not only wittier than the husbands, but also cleverer than the rakes. The former are therefore easily deceived and thus open the way for the latter to satisfy the wives' sexual desires. Behn's and Pix's portrayal of character types is similar to those of the male playwrights. However, it is interesting to note that the female playwrights more outspokenly address the theme of forced marriages and women's sexual restrictions in Restoration society, which is not only extremely competitive on the one hand, but also terribly hypocritical and corrupt on the other. Every male character in the plays wants to be superior by means of cheating, deceiving and mocking their rivals. However, it is only the clever rakes, such as Horner, and witty adulterous wives, like Arabella and Lady Fulbank, who understand that most of what the characters say is, in fact, the exact opposite of their intended behaviour and this insight makes them superior to all the other characters.

Moreover, Horner, for example, does not care if Mr Pinchwife or Sir Jaspar realise that they are cuckolded by him or not. He gains a certain pleasure from the sport of gambling and chasing women, and this in turn gives him a feeling of having sexual power over all the other members of society. Horner knows that he is a potent man and the women he seduces know it as well, and this seems to remain the only important matter for the rake. As regards the many other rakes in the comedies analysed, such as Woodall in *The Kind Keeper*, Beaugard in *The Soldiers' Fortune*, Gayman in *The Lucky Chance* and Wittmore and Lodwick in *Sir Patient Fancy*, sexual virility seems the only means of power that is left to them, since in contrast to Horner, the rakes in the comedies of the late 1670s and 1680s were deprived of their financial and political power by the Whigs. The rakes' potency, therefore, not only shows their sexual superiority to the presumably impotent City husbands, but also functions as a means of revenge. In the following chapter, the cuckolding plots and the sexual and political power struggle will be analysed in more detail.

4 The cuckolding plots

With regard to Restoration drama it can be said that the handling of an adulterous affair, including its initiation and the arrangement of clandestine meetings full of enjoyment is a central theme in a large number of plays. In order to keep their affairs secret, many adulterous wives or husbands rely on the trustworthiness and support of a few loyal maids or footmen who seem unlikely to gossip or even blackmail. This chapter is supposed to provide a thorough analysis of the cuckolding plots in the selected plays. To be more precise, this section will investigate the meaning and consequences of cuckolding acts, illustrate the frequency of the acts in the plays and describe the locations where the couples usually engage in extra-marital sex. Moreover, the wives' and the rakes' reasons for participating in adulterous liaisons will be outlined.

Generally speaking, Restoration comedies portray stock characters and revolve around stock situations. Therefore, they can be grouped into the following three types: plot- or action-oriented comedies, character-oriented comedies or thought- and word-oriented comedies (Hume 58). Hume states that comedies can also be categorized according to their main plot line and are therefore characterized as marriage comedies, cuckolding comedies, gulling comedies and marital discord comedies (Hume 135). This means that matrimony, cuckolding, fornication, gulling, or marriage in a state of disrepair is the object of schemes. These four common plot formulas, of course, show a noticeable difference in tone and atmosphere (Hume 128-129). Interestingly, the subsidiary plots frequently vary in the plays and it is the arrangement of different plot types that leads to a diversity of results. Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, for example, draws special attention to cuckoldry, but also shows a marriage plot in the couple Harcourt and Alithea (Hume 135). The comedies analysed in this study can be characterized as cuckolding comedies with the main plot revolving around the act of cuckolding.

4.1 The act of cuckolding

As already illustrated earlier in this analysis, a cuckold is a man whose wife is having an affair with another man. This shows that the act of cuckolding always involves a love triangle, in other words, three people who are connected with each other in a particular

situation, in which all participants have different interests.² Hume explains that the love triangle with its tensions, conflicts and designs, is the main feature of numerous plays. *The Country Wife*, for instance, is a good example, since it deals with three triangles that show similar characteristics. All three plots deal with a contemptible fop who loses his woman to a rakish man. The audience will usually side with the wife and the rake in outwitting the fop, no matter if the rake's aim is marriage or fornication. In the outwitting plot the adulterous couple is often confronted with unfortunate events, which hinder their plans. These include rendezvous in garden houses, meetings in disguise, unforeseen appearances of husbands and subsequent hidings under beds, in closets or trunks (Hume 138).

With regard to the various cuckolding acts in the analysed plays, it is striking to note that it is usually young, handsome rakish men or old, contemptible comic lechers who pursue beautiful young women. The cuckolding acts are not only put into practice during the course of the plays, but are often likely to continue in the future. In some comedies the husbands even agree, rather unwillingly though, to future cuckoldry, because they are forced by the rakes, as for example, in Behn's *The Lucky Chance*, Pix's *The Spanish Wives* or Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune*. With regard to the latter, Sir Davy has to submit to Beaugard's command of wearing horns in the future. In the course of the play, the soldier pretends to have been murdered according to Sir Davy's instructions. Beaugard's knowledge of Sir Davy's plot to murder him puts the rake into a superior position. The husband finally agrees to Sir Jolly's suggestions of bedding the rake in Lady Duncie's chamber, and tells her to do everything in order to bring the soldier back to life. This, of course, serves as the lovers' perfect chance to cuckold Sir Davy. Facing the threat of imprisonment towards the end of the play, the aged wealthy husband agrees to future cuckoldry with uncomfortable laughter, as can be seen in the following quote (Morgan-Russell 349).

BEAUGARD Nay, sir, I have a hank upon you. There are laws for cut-throats, sir; and as you tender your future credit, take this wronged lady home, and use her handsomely—use her like my mistress, sir, do you mark me?—that when we think fit to meet again, I hear no complaint of you. This must be done, friend.

SIR JOLLY In troth, and it is but reasonable, very reasonable in troth.

LADY DUNCIE Can you, my dear, forgive me one misfortune?

² Cf. Collins COBUILD Dictionary on CD-Rom 2006.

SIR DAVY Madam, in one word, I am thy ladyship's most humble servant and cuckold, Sir Davy Duncce, knight, living in Covent Garden. [*Aside*] Ha, ha, ha! Well, this is mighty pretty. Ha, ha, ha! (5.4.117-126)

Beaugard instructs Sir Davy: "use her like my mistress", which shows that Lady Duncce is a property that was stolen by Sir Davy but rightfully belongs to Beaugard. The rake wants to document the resolution in writing when saying "you must, sir, before we part, enter into such covenants for performance as I shall think fit" (5.4.151-152). Otway's play illustrates that "the only 'Covenants' entered into by Cits, Whigs, and Dissenters will be those dictated by the dominant Town wits" (Canfield 86). Beaugard, Sir Davy and Lady Duncce are now bound to a *ménage à trois*, because the husband's legal title to his wife cannot be broken. The soldier's rightful place was usurped by the intruder Sir Davy, a Whig and power broker, and this act can never be rectified (Cordner; Clayton 1995: xx). Sir Davy, clearly aware of his subordinate role, is forced to keep his wife as another man's mistress. This can be explained by the fact that Restoration England was not a society in which married couples were divorced or separated. It is therefore suggested that Beaugard's continuing liaison with Lady Duncce could be interpreted as a permanent act of theft of the husband's wife, his legal property.

Kosofsky Sedgwick claims that the act of cuckolding, for example in *The Country Wife*, is an indirect sexual act, performed by one man on another. This illustrates a 'homosocial' bonding, which effectively excludes women, which can be seen in the following quote from *The Country Wife*. Women serve in this kind of relationship merely as objects, which can be exchanged between the men (qtd. in Chernaik 3).

DORILANT A Mistress shou'd be like a little Country retreat near the Town, not to dwell in constantly, but only for a night and away; to tast the Town the better when a Man returns.

HORNER I tell you, 'tis as hard be a good Fellow, a good Friend, and a Lover of Women, as 'tis to be a good Fellow, a good Friend, and a Lover of Money: You cannot follow both, then choose your side; Wine gives you liberty, Love takes it away. (1.1.267-276)

The women in Restoration plays, as for example in *The Country Wife*, "seek to resist or subvert such commodification" (Chernaik 3). In this triangular relationship the cuckold-maker is superior in knowledge and power to the cuckold, who is often not aware of the wife's adulterous relationship (Morgan-Russell 348-349). Canfield sees cuckolding as a threat to elite society and consequently as a threat to property relations. It is noteworthy

that some critics interpret the act of cuckolding as a challenge to the patriarchal order, while others regard it as a confirmation of this system (qtd. in Rosenthal 18-19). Women and wives in particular function either as circulated commodities or currencies in a male economy. Lady Dunc in *The Soldiers' Fortune*, for example, is portrayed as a physical property that can be gained, possessed and occupied. When Sir Davy becomes aware of the soldier's first attempt to have sex with his wife, he refers to Lady Dunc as his property: "I'll have him hanged for burglary. He has broken my house, and broke the peace upon my wife. Very good!" (3.2.58-59). In *The Country Wife*, for instance, Pinchwife wants to have Margery for his own private use and therefore is determined to keep her ignorant and deny her the pleasures of town life. The following quote shows that Pinchwife does not want to circulate his 'property' among other men, such as Horner, who is eager to seize the young wife (Morgan-Russell 350).

PIN. She's too auker'd, ill favour'd, and silly to bring to Town.
HAR. Then methinks you shou'd bring her, to be taught breeding.
PIN. To be taught; no, Sir, I thank you, good Wives, and private Souldiers
shou'd be ignorant. – [I'll keep her from your instructions, I warrant you.
[...]
PIN. 'Tis my maxime, he's a Fool that marrys, but he's a greater that does not
marry a Fool; what is wit in a Wife good for, but to make a Man a Cuckold?
HOR. Yes, to keep it from his knowledge.
PIN. A Fool cannot contrive to make her husband a Cuckold. (1.1.478-485;
516-523)

In Behn's Cit-cuckolding comedy *Sir Patient Fancy*, Lady Fancy is distrusted by Leander, Sir Patient's nephew, who answers to Lodwick's question why Sir Patient married a young woman: "To keep up his title of cuckold, I think; for she has beauty enough for temptation, and no doubt makes the right use on't" (Behn 39). This shows that he is only aware of Lady Fancy's effect on men, but not of how she is treated by the them. Lodwick's egotistical use of Lady Fancy's sexual passions and Wittmore's following ready agreement to engage in an adulterous liaison with her prove that the woman is regarded as a commodity which can be circulated among men. Lady Fancy, similar to Lady Fulbank, can be interpreted as one of Behn's "truly subversive heroine tricksters who succeed by their wits in destabilizing, particularly through sexual promiscuity, that order's patriarchal [...] power structure of inheritance" (Canfield 3). However, the women tricksters are unable to set up their own order in a male-dominated society (Canfield 3). Behn's Lady Fulbank in *The Lucky Chance* is similarly treated as an object and used as a sexual currency by her mercenary husband, who tricks her into

an adulterous act with Gayman. The audience does not witness the sexual act between Gayman and Julia, because it takes place off stage. This makes it more private and less humiliating than the cuckolding act of Lodwick and Lucia in *Sir Patient Fancy*. It can be assumed that Julia and Gayman engaged in sexual intercourse, because Julia later furiously claims to have been made a base prostitute (Copeland 76). It is interesting to note that Sir Cautious Fulbank is totally aware of the cuckolding act and even functions as its initiator in the play.

The alderman Sir Feeble Fainwould, an old comic lecher, actually never gets the chance to lie with his wife, and similar to Sir Davy, is forced to keep Leticia as Belmour's mistress in the future, as can be seen in the following quote.

BELMOUR No, you had rather yet go on in sin: Thou wouldst live on, and be a baffled cuckold.

SIR FEEBLE Oh, not for the world, sir: I am convinced and mortified.

BELMOUR Maintain her fine, undo thy peace to please her, and still be cuckolded on; believe her, trust her, and be cuckolded still.

[...]

BELMOUR If thou repent'st, renounce her, fly her sight;
Shun her bewitching charms, as thou wouldst hell:
Those dark eternal mansions of the dead,
Whither I must descend. (5.2.62-66; 69-72)

Limberham, the foolish keeper in Dryden's Cit-cuckolding comedy *The Kind Keeper*, reconciles with his mistress Tricksy at the end of the play after frequent scenes of arguing and forgiving. He seems unaware of the sexual act Tricksy and Woodall perform in the garden house and, therefore, is easily tricked by the mistress into paying reparation: "I'll not wrong my Innocence so much, nor this Gentleman's; but, since you have accus'd us falsely, four hundred a year, betwixt us two, will make us some part of reparation" (5.1.414-416). It is likely that the keeper will wear horns in the future, since Limberham recognizes the hints at his mistress's infidelity, but he is too much of a coward to discover the truth. The witwoud Brainsick vainly assumes that his wife, in contrast to all other women, has stayed loyal to him. He is, however, totally mistaken as Woodall's words illustrate in the quote below.

PLEAS. Your hand, sweet moyety.

WOOD. And heart too, my comfortable Importance.

Mistress, and Wife, by turns, I have possess'd:

He who enjoys 'em both, in one, is bless'd. (5.1.617-620)

Woodall, an energetic “young Cavalier libertine” (Canfield 82), is in a superior position to the aged men, since he has made them both cuckolds. However, he does not share this knowledge with the husbands and sees his intrigues as a personal victory. He made use of the husbands’ properties, that is, their sexually promiscuous wives, and sees the women as his trophies, when saying: “’Tis well: I’ll plot the rest of my affairs a-bed; for ‘tis resolv’d that *Limberham* shall not wear Horns alone: and I am impatient till I add to my Trophy the Spoils of *Brainsick*” (4.2.138-140). The impoverished Woodall takes revenge on the rich, mercenary husbands and steals the kind of ‘property’ that cannot be controlled by them, namely their wives’ sexuality. His agreement to marry Pleasance might either indicate the rake’s reformed character or, which is more plausible, function as a simple necessity for him in order to inherit his father’s money. In the Restoration period there was a widespread belief that elite young rakes must marry for the sake of family lines and not for reasons of love or attraction. The idea was that strong families build nations and thus unadulterated marriage is not the result of a strong society, but in contrast, the foundation of it (Rosenthal 11-13). This holds true for Woodall, who follows his father’s wishes in agreeing to wed Mrs Pleasance, an heiress, and, as Dryden described, a spiteful character. By means of marriage, as Rosenthal argues against widespread claim, the rake is not punished or reformed by the society. The rake’s marriage, on the other hand, is a means for the Restoration audience, in particular the elite society, to forget about his flamboyant misdemeanours. The author thus suggests that “Restoration sex comedies [...] recommend amnesia as a response to libertine desire and libertine class betrayal” (Rosenthal 16-17).

Sir Davy in Otway’s *The Soldiers’ Fortune*, similar to the cuckolds Limberham and Brainsick, is confronted with the threat of Beaugard’s Cavalier potency. The play is full of violent images and references. Sir Davy’s constant fright that Beaugard will cut his nose off illustrates his fear of castration. The cuckolding trick in Otway’s comedy, according to Canfield, is one of the most amusing. Afraid that Beaugard’s death will bring him to prison, he asks his wife in the first quote to raise the rake from the dead. The second quote, in which Sir Davy asks Sir Jolly about what to do with Beaugard’s corpse, perfectly shows that the egotistical coward acts purely out of self-interest (Canfield 85-87).

SIR DAVY Prithee do so much as try thy skill. There may be one dram of life left in him yet. Take him up to thy chamber, put him into thy own bed, and try what thou canst do with him. Prithee do. If thou canst but find motion in him, all may be well yet. I'll go up to my closet in the garret and say my prayers meanwhile. (4.3.63-68)

[...]

SIR DAVY Is there no way to have him privately buried and conceal this murder? Must I needs be hanged by the neck like a dog, neighbour? Do I look as if I would be hanged? (5.2.87-89)

In *The Country Wife* or *The London Cuckolds*, both comedies portraying not only witty and experienced town ladies, but also young country wives who have just learned the trick, the husbands are not explicitly confronted with the fact that they are cuckolded and it is therefore likely that they will continue to wear horns in the future. When it comes to the character Horner in *The Country Wife*, it can be observed that the lecherous women turn into promiscuous sexual rivals. Indeed, friendship and politeness are only pretended in order to carry on secretly with their affairs. When the women come to Horner's lodgings in need of sexual pleasures, the rake initially finds it difficult to cope with the situation. He then leads the women to different chambers in order for them not to be seen by each other. Gender roles are clearly reversed, because it is the women of the 'the virtuous gang' and Margery pursuing Horner and not the other way round. Sir Jaspar Fidget does not find out about his wife's infidelity, since the women show female solidarity in pursuing their own interest and claim their virtue and Horner is unable to pride himself openly with cuckolding as the discovery of his intact potency would destroy his future designs. It is claimed that Horner's sexual act with Lady Fidget, a woman socially marked as more desirable, exposes the elite's lack of inherent superiority (Rosenthal 18-20). *The Country Wife*, therefore, "explores how this elite community no longer convinced of its inherent superiority can maintain its hierarchy and coherence in the face of 'leveling' forces suggested by Horner's libertine project" (Rosenthal 20). Horner shows different designs with Margery than with Lady Fidget and the members of the virtuous gang, since he resolves to pursue the country wife before he has actually met her in person. Pinchwife knows the town, as he seems to have been a cuckold-maker in his youth, and vainly believes he can avoid receiving horns from other men. Pinchwife's hypocrisy when saying "Well, Gentleman, you may laugh at me, but you shall never lye with my Wife, I know the Town" (1.1.552-554) and his misogyny are clearly satirized in the play (Rosenthal 20-21). The conflict in Wycherley's Cavalier-cuckolding play is not merely interclass but intraclass, which

means that participating parties, that is the rake and cuckolded husbands, all belong to the ruling class. According to Canfield, this shows that no class has the right to rule over another and that each oligarchy exerts authority, similar to the physical and sexual dominance of the rakes, because it has the power to rule (2-3). The women in this order, as for example Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang and Margery, do not rebel against this order, but merely “insist on their choices within it” (Canfield 2-3). Horner not so much wants to take revenge on the husbands, but sees cuckolding more as a game which only skilled rakes can win. Right from the very beginning he is totally aware of his superior position to the husbands and clearly knows that the wives will be attracted to his intact potency. The audience shares Horner’s knowledge and is therefore well aware, quite in contrast to Sir Jaspar, that it is not china they are looking for in the chamber. The famous ‘china scene’, which presents an extremely farcical and funny action, contains many double entendres, which result in sexual double-think and can be interpreted as a confession of the ladies, as the following quote shows.

LA. FID. And I have been toying and moyling for the pretti’st piece of China,
my Dear.
HORN. Nay, she has been too hard for me do what I cou’d.
SQUEAM. Oh Lord I’ll have some China too, good Mr. *Horner*, don’t think to
give other people China, and me none, come in with me too.
HORN. Upon my honour I have none left now.
SQUEAM. Nay, nay I have known you deny your China before now, but you
shan’t put me off so, come –
HORN. This Lady had the last there.
LA. FID. Yes indeed Madam, to my certain knowledge he has no more left.
SQUEAM. O but it may be he may have some you could not find.
LA. FID. What, d’y think if he had had any left, I would not have had it too, for
we women of quality never think we have China enough.
HORN. Do not take it ill, I cannot make China for you all, but I will have a Rol-
waggon for you too, another time.
MRS. SQUEAM. Thank you dear Toad.
LA. FID. What do you mean by that promise? *To Horn. aside.*
HORN. Alas, she has an innocent, literal understanding. *Apart to Lady Fidget.*
(4.3.230-256)

This exchange among the women, unlike other scenes, turns the man or rather the man’s potency into a commodity, namely china. Each woman believes that the other does not know about Horner’s real sexual vitality and therefore is assumed to have a literal understanding. Horner pleases both of the women, but makes each believe to be his only affair. However, the women learn about the truth and decide to share the rake as their sexual object. It could be argued that Horner is now turned into the property of these

women and that they seem to be the winners at the end of the play, as their adultery is not discovered and they continue to seek sexual pleasure outside their marriages. Moreover, the 'china scene' shows that power relations are obviously reversed. Normally, it is the men who talk about women as sexual objects, but in this scene it is the women who share and objectify the common man Horner. It shows that women are certainly as hypocritical and as sexually voracious as men. It is Lady Fidget who invites Horner to let her look at his 'china' when her husband is present. They then engage in sexual intercourse behind closed doors while Sir Jaspar naïvely assumes they are just looking for china. This scene, probably best of all, stresses Sir Jaspar's stupidity. The audience, of course, knows that china never really refers to the object, but to sexual intercourse.

The cuckolding plots in *The London Cuckolds* are more typical of the period and show "city gallants [who] use their superior worldliness to outmaneuver the less refined husbands" (Rosenthal 21). Ravenscroft's comedy, as many other Cit-cuckolding plays, perfectly illustrates that the ideal, potent Cavalier rakes have power over the defective, impotent Cits and that "the bodies of women become the contested ground for class dominance and, ultimately, symbols of the contested land of England" (Canfield 2). Many cuckolding schemes in the play fail, for example, Eugenia's or Arabella's designs with Ramble. The cuckolding acts that work out successfully all seem to have happened spontaneously. By chance Townly appears in Arabella's room, by chance Ramble meets Peggy alone in the house and by chance Eugenia finds out that the disguised guest in the house is Loveday, her true love. All cuckolding schemes are likely to continue, because the town wives are witty and Peggy has just learned that there is something more than her presumably impotent husband can actually give her. Ramble notes at the end of the play "But I am sure of my pretty Fool when ere I can come at her" (5.1), meaning Peggy's raised sexual appetite. The following quote shows how easily Arabella and Eugenia outwitted their husbands.

ARAB. *Eugenia* I now spy the Hypocrite under the Veil of Devotion. I always had too good an opinion of your wit, to believe you were in Earnest; now we know one another better, let us meet to morrow; Each confess the whole truth, and laugh heartily at the folly of our Husbands.

EUG. With mine you see how smoothly matters went,
He is a Cuckold, Cudgell'd, and Content. (5.1)

Lady Governor in *The Spanish Wives* attempts to engage in an affair with an English Colonel, but, typical of sentimental comedy, her designs are prevented and cuckolding is never actually put into practice in the play. Both, the lady and her husband are portrayed sympathetically in Pix's comedy. They are reunited in the end and their affection for each other seems to be true. It is the Governor's trust in his wife that makes her feel guilty about attempted adultery. Since the Lady enjoys liberty and freedom, it can be assumed that this is not her first design to cuckold her husband. However, the play does not provide any information which would point towards her infidelity in the past. The furious Governor is quickly calmed by the woman, who even receives the right to rule over him again, which could be interpreted as an indirect invitation to secretly cuckold him in the future. The Governor's words at the end of the play clearly illustrate his insecurity and doubts of his wife's future loyalty: "And I'll keep my Tittup,—that is, if I can" (3.6). What is particularly interesting is that he promised the Colonel to bequeath on him after his death his wife and a large estate if he kept his promise to stay away from her until the Governor's death, which can be seen in the quote below.

G O V. And d'ye hear,—if ye prove a man of honor, about threescore years hence
I may leave ye Tittup for a legacy, and abundance of wealth, a world of
wealth, by the honor of Spain.—Nay, 'tis worth staying for. (3.6)

The Lady Governor obviously functions as a means of property that is handed over from one man to another. To put it differently, the right to own her is passed between the men, without her knowledge or consent. The play suggests that a wife's loyalty or infidelity is clearly not important enough to become the major concern of a husband or of society and that an adulterous act committed by a wife is not worse than an extra-marital affair of the husband. What distinguishes Pix's play from the others analysed, is that the traditional plot is reversed. It is the husband who forgives the erring wife and not the wife who forgives the husband. It could even be argued that the comedy suggests gender equality, since both the wife and the husband overlook their spouse's deficiencies, that is, the husband's lack of physical attraction and the wife's lapse in constancy.

The portrayal of the Marquess' pathological jealousy clearly ridicules fears of cuckoldry. Elenora, who is bound to the Marquess in an illegal marriage, is freed and

even promised divorce by the Cardinal, which will enable her to marry her rightful husband Camillus. Pix acts unconventionally in devaluating the significance of a woman's virginity before marriage and in ridiculing the husband's fear of cuckoldry. However, she does not openly discredit the possessive and cruel behaviour of husbands, which was commonly regarded as husbandly love in the period. The Restoration audience, however, could certainly not regard the Marquess as a true loving husband, since he is portrayed as an extremely loathsome and totally detestable character (Rogers xv-xvi).

Another interesting question to analyse is **where and how often** cuckolding acts are performed in the comedies. Munns explains that both tragic and comic plays portray human life as incompatibly separated into a "private appetitive nature, which is anarchic, and the public demands of 'Forms and ceremonies' which are confining and/or false" (Munns 2000: 151). These divisions are reproduced in comedies when scenes move from parks and public squares to locations inside the house. Stage spaces were changed with newly developed scenic design and machinery, in order to verify but also to unsettle the audience's assumptions of the private and public domains on the stage. A rake, for instance, might be at ease in a woman's chamber, but totally discomforted in the park, or vice versa. Generally speaking, the plays portray characters that live in two contrastive worlds, the private and the public. The authoritative structures, which would establish boundaries between the two worlds, had clearly been weakened (Munns 2000: 151-152). The meaning of language is also destabilized in the plays and will be more thoroughly analysed in chapter **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**, which investigates the use of language.

Generally speaking, a greater amount of time is invested in planning the cuckolding intrigues than in actually enjoying the desired outcome. The characters, of course, wish to engage in cuckolding more frequently, but many of the designs fail or take a different direction than intended. The reasons why numerous plots do not succeed is, for example, the unexpected appearance of husbands or household guests. Since the homes are generally frequently visited, it is private chambers or garden houses that function as a perfect place for clandestine meetings. However, the rake occasionally does not end up in the arms of the desired woman, because chambers are easily mistaken at night.

In Wycherley's *The Country Wife* 1675, cuckolding takes place only within the confined space of the house, to be more precise, at Horner's lodging. This is particularly interesting, since in all the other comedies analysed, the wife's bedchamber or the garden house functions as the place for clandestine meetings. The reason may be that the aristocratic Horner is portrayed as a wealthy man, who possesses not only sexual, but also financial power in the form of estates. The fact that cuckolding is merely performed at his house shows that Horner is vigorously pursued by the women. The rakes of the later comedies, however, already suffer from the effects of the political crisis in the late 1670s, which led to the Whigs gaining power. Rakish Cavalier gentlemen in the comedies of the late 1670s and 1680s are often portrayed as impoverished and deprived of their property and estates. Woodall, for example, in Dryden's *The Kind Keeper* 1678, returns from a sexually active and excessive life in France, only to find that mercenary and treacherous Whigs such as Limberham and Brainsick have gained financial and political power. His frequent sexual revenge in the form of cuckolding not only takes place in his and the wives' bedchambers in the boarding-house, but also outside in the garden house.

Burns describes Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* as a "house party comedy", which is "worked out in the overlapping intrigues of two households" (Burns 133), showing the restrictions of women's lives. That a woman's time is already worked out for her is symbolized with the watch, which Lucretia is given by the foolish country suitor Sir Credulous Easy. It is not only a woman's time that is restricted and limited, but also her space. This means that women cannot enjoy any kind of personal freedom, which, for example, Lady Fancy explains when saying about Sir Patient: "[...] I am eternally plagued with his company; he's so fond of me, he scarce gives me time to write to thee, he waits on me from room to room, [...]" (2.1). The reader learns, that Sir Patient never leaves town without his wife, because he wants to show off the young beautiful woman. Lady Fancy does not have much privacy in her marriage, which forces her to become inventive not only as regards her language, but also when it comes to the plotting. In the following lines Lucia instructs Wittmore where to meet at night.

LADY FANCY There was no other way but this to have secured my happiness with thee; there needs no more than that you come anon to the garden backgate; where you shall find admittance.—Sir Patient is like to lie alone tonight.
WITTMORE Till then 'twill be a thousand ages.

LADY FANCY At games of love husbands to cheat is fair, 'Tis the gallant we play with on the square. (2.2)

Lady Fancy's maid Maundy is expecting Wittmore at night at the garden door, which portrays an escape of the confining space in the house (Burns 133-134). Burns puts forward that "Behn's ever expansive evocation of the sensual, blurs as night does, the distinction between persons, between indoors and out" (134). The cuckolding scene, in which Lady Fancy mistakes Lodwick's identity for Wittmore's, is full of emancipated eroticism (Burns 133-135). Lady Fancy's long desired cuckolding act with Wittmore takes place in her bedchamber and is probably the most hilarious scene in the play, with much fast-paced action and full of slapstick and physical humour. To avoid discovery by the husband, Wittmore runs behind the bed, comes out, falls, pulls the chair down and hides under the bed and since the clumsy rake does not reach the door in time, Lady Fancy sits on his back and pretends to swoon.

In Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune* 1680, Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* 1681, and Behn's *The Lucky Chance* 1686, the adulterous acts solely take place within the house. To be more precise, Otway's Beaugard and Lady Duncie not only enjoy extra-marital sex within the cuckold's house, that is, in the wife's bedchamber, but also at the whoremaster's lodging, where the couple is finally discovered. To Sir Davy's claim: "I hope you'll bear me witness, Mr Constable" (5.4.89), Sir Jolly ironically marks in an aside: "That he's a cuckold, Mr Constable" (5.4.90). The constable's discovery of the couple, in addition with Sir Jolly's peeping behaviour, addresses the audience's voyeurism and emphasizes "the exposure of the private space of adultery to public view" (Morgan-Russell 357). The rakes in *The London Cuckolds*, similar to Beaugard, almost despair at the power of the Whigs. It is because of the wives' sexual voracity and their initiative that the rakes gain easy access to the women's bed-chambers, where adulterous acts successfully take place. Behn draws a clear line between the public and private space in her comedy *The Lucky Chance*, since she takes the cuckolding act between Julia and Gayman off stage, and illustrates Julia's masque as a private event, which remains secret to the wife and her trustful servants.

As regards the plays' endings, the selected comedies show that satires very often end in non-closure. In other words, Restoration satirical comedies neither end in the restoration of the estate nor in the restoration of the country. Some comedies show a rather

conservative ending, which might be the portrayal of poetical justice or a warning against “the destruction of the old order from its own internal threats” (Canfield 5). Some radical plays, however, comically illustrate that this order is merely empty rhetoric (Canfield 4-5).

4.2 Initiation and planning of the cuckolding act

It is essential to note that the majority of cuckolding acts are initiated by the rakes, who charmingly and effusively declare their love in order to bed the desired ladies. Interestingly, it is then the woman’s task to do the plotting, that is, to arrange for an ideal place and time in order to perform the sexual act. As already illustrated in chapter 3.1, the rake Wittmore openly admits that he is totally unskilled at plotting and that he is therefore entirely dependant on Lady Fancy’s skills. Adulterous wives, similar to many rakes, frequently rely on the help of trustworthy household servants when it comes to arranging the clandestine meetings, distracting the unexpectedly appearing husbands or assisting the lovers to escape in order to keep discovery at hair’s breath away. The servants, although they are not given much space in many of the plays, repeatedly drive the plot forward with their actions.

In *The Country Wife*, for example, the maid Lucy takes all the blame in the end on herself in order to save Margery and Alithea. Canfield notes that Lucy not only “[empowers] the eponymous Margery to evade the sadistic patriarchal control of her jealous husband” (in Marshall: 150), but also helps Alithea to escape marriage with a fop. The maid instructs Margery on what to tell Pinchwife in order to have him bring her to Horner’s private lodgings. Lucy, well aware of her wit and superb intriguing skills, brags about her plotting when saying: “Now cou’d I speak, if I durst, and ‘solve the Riddle, who am the Author of it” (5.4.306-307). Lucy wants Alithea to marry the rake Harcourt instead of the fop Sparkish, she reveals her counter-cultural values when saying: “Lord, Madam, what shou’d you do with a fool to your Husband, you intend to be honest don’t you? then that husbandly virtue, credulity, is thrown away upon you” (4.1.59-62). A naïve husband, in her opinion, is only of best use to a wife who intends adultery. She clearly instructs Margery to lie in order to secure the country wife’s libertine designs with Horner. Acting independently, Lucy saves not only Margery and Alithea, but also the town wits Horner and Harcourt, when testifying Margery’s innocence in the end (Canfield in Marshall: 150). Horner secretly promises Lucy to

reward her in some form, probably sexually, for her help, which can be seen in the following quote:

LUCY I'll fetch you off, and her too, if she will but hold her tongue. *Apart to Hor.*

HOR. Canst thou? I'll give thee – *Apart to Luc.*

LUCY to MR. PIN. Pray have but patience to hear me Sir, who am the unfortunate cause of all this confusion, your Wife is innocent [...] (5.4.391-396)

As regards the virtuous gang, it is the wives who plan the cuckolding intrigue as soon as they find out about Horner's virility. Horner knows that as soon as the ladies' sexual appetite is raised, they will manipulate Sir Jaspar into delivering them to the rake's lodgings. Sir Jaspar, indeed, quite readily shares his women with Horner, since he wants to mock the eunuch and his supposedly lost manhood. This proves that the town wit Horner initiates the cuckolding, but, interestingly, it is Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang and Margery's maid Lucy who successfully plan the sexual acts.

Constantly confronted with charming words by her adorer Wittmore, Lady Fancy is clearly the one who plans the cuckolding in *Sir Patient Fancy* together with her maid Maundy and Lady Knowell. Lady Fancy's maid claims what is true for many plays: "Well, there never came good of lovers that were given to too much talking; had you been silently kind all this while, you had been willing to have parted by this time" (2.1). Too much conversation, as Maundy believes, is a waste of time, which could be better used for the enjoyment of pleasurable sexual moments. That Lady Fancy is clearly dependant on Maundy's help and loyalty as well as on her discreteness can be seen in the following passage.

LADY FANCY Maundy, have you commanded all the servants to bed?

MAUNDY Yes, Madam, not a mouse shall stir, and I have made ready the chamber next the garden for your Ladyship. (3.1)

Obviously, the maid seems to be used to delivering young gallants to her lady's chamber. Therefore, Wittmore can be assumed not to have been her only lover so far, as can be seen in the following statement, which reveals Maundy's liberated attitude towards a woman's sexuality.

MAUNDY Now am I returned to my old trade again, fetch and carry my lady's lovers; I was afraid when she had been married, these night-works would have ended; but to say truth, there's a conscience to be used in all things, and there's no reason she should languish with an old man when a young man may be had. (3.3)

When Lucia's first attempt to have sex with her gallant fails and she unknowingly sleeps with Lodwick, she is neither furious about the deceit nor feels like a prostitute. Her mind is determinedly set on embracing Wittmore, a man who obviously "is no match for Lucia's wit" (Canfield 146), since he cannot offer any contribution to the planning of their cuckolding act. Leander's advice to Lodwick: "You were best consult your mother and sister; women are best at intrigues of this kind" (Behn 81), proves that it is clearly women who show the greatest skills in contriving cuckolding plots. This is certainly not only true for the comedy *Sir Patient Fancy*, but for all other plays analysed in this study. Lucia, "the prime trickster" (Canfield 146) not only cuckolds Sir Patient in his house, but also bluntly lies into his face and successfully robs her husband off the sum of 8000 Pounds (Canfield 146).

In Behn's comedy *The Lucky Chance* it is, very surprisingly, the husband who arranges for the performance of the cuckolding act. The mercenary egotist sees his wife as a currency and sets a night with her as a prize in a game with the rake Gayman. However, the rake also partly contributes to the initiation of the cuckolding act, since he makes the suggestion of considering Julia worth 'nothing'. When finding out about the lover's true identity, Lady Fulbank blames her husband for making her a base adulteress and treating her like a prostitute. She swears to separate forever from his bed and by that, cleverly, reserves future opportunities to cuckold him, and at the same time preserves her honourable reputation, as can be seen in the passage below.

GAYMAN Can you be angry, Julia? Because I only seized my right of love.
LADY FULBANK And must my honour be the price of it? Could nothing but my fame reward your passion? What, make me a base prostitute, a foul adulteress? Oh, be gone, be gone, dear robber of my quiet. (Weeping)
SIR CAUTIOUS *[aside]* Oh, fearful!
GAYMAN Oh! Calm your rage, and hear me: if you are so, You are an innocent adulteress. It was the feeble husband you enjoyed
In cold imagination, and no more; Shyly you turned away, faintly resigned.
SIR CAUTIOUS *[aside]* Hum, did she so?
GAYMAN Till my excess of love betrayed the cheat.
SIR CAUTIOUS *[aside]* Aye, aye, that was my fear.
[...]

LADY FULBANK I am convinced the fault was all my husband's;
(*Kneels*) And here I vow, by all things just and sacred,
To separate for ever from his bed. (5.7.18-32; 62-64)

In Dryden's *The Kind Keeper* Woodall is clearly the one who initiates the cuckolding acts, but certainly not the one who plans them. The rake attracts the ladies with charming words and quite openly refers to his sexual virility and desires. The rake totally relies on his servant Gervase's help when planning the intrigues and escaping precarious situations. The servant has often advised Woodall on his actions, as he says: "I call your Conscience to witness, how often I have given you wholesom counsel; [...]" (1.1.32-33). Thanks to Tricksy's knowledge of her husband's reactions, discovery is always hair's breath away. Judith, a maid of the house, also plays an important role in planning and arranging the cuckolding of the witwoud Brainsick. Afraid of being discovered by her husband, Mrs Brainsick hides Woodall in Judith's chamber. This totally spontaneous reaction does not leave her any time to think about the consequences, which only a few moments later become clear to her. The following quote shows that the young beautiful maid is undoubtedly sexually rewarded by the libertine rake.

MRS. BRAIN. (*Aside*) I have a dismal apprehension in my head, that he's giving my Maid a cast of his Office, in my stead. O, how it stings me! (3.1.203-205)

Tricksy's and Mrs Brainsick's efforts to arrange for clandestine meetings with Woodall sometimes fail or take different turns than intended, for example, when the note Mrs Brainsick put into Woodall's glove falls out and the rake assumes it to be Tricksy's invitation for love making. Tricksy, indeed, seems more quick-witted than Mrs Brainsick and to have more experience in planning cuckolding acts, since she cleverly helps Woodall to escape into the garden house or hide in a chest. Her intriguing skills are also shown at the opening of the play, when she tells Woodall to pretend to be an Italian merchant to Limberham: "Then you shall pass for my *Italian* merchant of Essences: Here's a little Box of 'em just ready" (1.1.406-407). When Woodall, afraid to spoil the plot, claims that he speaks no Italian, Tricksy ensures him of the prize he might expect and raises his sexual appetite:

TRICK. You must venture that: when we are rid of *Limberham*, 'tis but slipping into your Chamber, throwing off your black Periwig, and Riding Sute, and you come out an *English-man*. No more; he's here." (1.1.410-413)

In Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* it is the witty wives and their trustworthy maids who arrange for the cuckolding. The rakes seem totally unable to plot successfully, since Ramble's designs fail constantly and Townly is too much distressed with whores and alcohol. Tempted by the rakes' handsome appearance and their Cavalier and Gentleman-like behaviour, the wives use their maids' help in order to bring the designed rakes into their chambers. However, not all of the cuckolding attempts are successful, since Ramble is once mistaken for Townly and husbands or guests appear unexpectedly in the houses. Eugenia's cuckolding plot of her husband is probably the most amusing in the play. While Dashwell, disguised as his wife Eugenia, is desperately waiting for Loveday in the garden house, the loving couple are enjoying sexual pleasures in her chamber. Arabella's maid Engine and Eugenia's maid Jane are trustworthy and witty assistants, as can be seen in the following quote, when Arabella asks Engine for help in addressing Townly discreetly and initiating a sexual affair with the rake.

ARAB. But how, *Engine*, what contrivance to let him know it? to write to him wou'd not doe so well.

ENGINE. Troth doe, Madam, write to him, a little Letter of rallery, that may look like a frolick as it were between Jest and Earnest.

ARAB. Writing wou'd show too great a forwardness.

ENGINE. No matter; if a right Cavalier, he will make the more haste to relieve a Lady in distress.

ARAB. No, thou shalt go to him, thou hast a pretty good way of speaking; I'll give thee some general hints and leave it to thy management.

ENGINE. I'll doe my part, I'll warrant you, Madam.

ARAB. Come, wee'll consider on't.

ENGINE. There needs but little consideration in this case, if you like the Gentleman, I'll secure you, the Gentleman shall like you. (1.1)

Lady Duncce, described as "quick-witted, streetwise, utterly exploitative of her husband [and] devoid of moral compunction" (Cordner; Clayton: 1995: xi), initiates and plans the cuckolding act in Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune*. It is noteworthy that she does not address the rake in person at the beginning, but through the whoremaster and pimp Sir Jolly Jumble. Lady Duncce, forced to marry Sir Davy for wealth, takes revenge by means of adultery and uses her husband as an instrument, as Sylvia remarks: "And so make him the property, the go-between, to bring the affair to an issue the more decently" (1.2.127-128), in order to initiate her affair with Beaugard (Cordner; Clayton 1995: xvii). Beaugard blunders whenever he is left on his own, and it is only by Lady Duncce's

and Sir Jolly's help that the rake's designs work out successfully. Indeed, his role in the play is rather passive, which is quite unusual for the character of the rake. Compared to the famous Horner, for example, Beaugard lacks initiative and inventiveness, however, the audience learns that he has a history as an adulterer. It is, in fact, Lady Duncie who shows ingenuity and creativity (Cordner; Clayton 1995: xx). To the audience, Sir Davy and to some extent also Beaugard, seem like marionettes in the wife's hands. She asks her maid Sylvia to help her in carrying out the intrigue: "But fortune, I hope, will smile, wouldst thou but be my friend, Sylvia" (1.2.78-79). The trustworthy and loyal maid answers: "In any mischievous design, with all my heart." (1.2.80). Beaugard's servants clearly help the loving couple when distracting Sir Davy and telling him that he is invited by the Lord Mayor. Sir Jolly also functions as an assistant in cuckolding, although the voyeuristic pimp only helps out of self-interest in order to satisfy his own sexual desires and to secure future employment by the ladies. He tries to convince Beaugard into working for him as a male whore to cuckold Sir Davy: "Thou shalt make him one, and I'll pimp for thee, dear heart. And shan't I hold the door? Shan't I peep, ha? Shan't I, you devil? You little dog, shan't I?" (1.1.246-248). In fact, it seems so unusual for a woman to use a whoremaster's help that Beaugard initially thinks he is being mocked. In contrast to *The Country Wife*, the audience is not informed about the lady's plans at the opening of the play, but only learns about them at the end of act one, in contrast to Sir Davy, who is confronted only in the end.

In *The Spanish Wives* the cuckolding plot is planned by the Governor's lady, who tells the Colonel: "Suppose you pretended a quarrel in England,—for which you were pursued, and begged leave to hide here" (2.2), since the rake admits to be unskilled at plotting: "My life! can't ye contrive some way to bless me? Your sex were ever most ingenious lucky at invention" (2.2). It is, however, mostly the servants who successfully plan the intrigues as, for example, Camillus' servant Hidewell, who functions as "a major contriver of the intrigues" (Steeves xx-xxi). The English Colonel is unable to manage the task alone, and asks Camillus to spare one of his eager servants for assistance, as illustrated below.

COL. [...] My Lord, I have a favor to beg: That you would lend me one of your implements tomorrow, to manage a plot I have in agitation.

CAM. Most willingly; take your choice.

FRI. I am at your service.

HIDEW. You are so forward,—Canonical fornication-broker,—I believe I am fittest for the gentleman's service.

FRI. Goodlack, Upstart! I helped ye to My Lord,—and now ye are for engrossing all business to yourself.

COL. Nay,—I must have the most expert, because the case is difficult. (2.3)

Amusingly, the two servants Hidewell and Friar Andrew even start to argue about the right to carry out the task. They hilariously boast with their excellent skills and with the supposedly enormously difficult plots they have carried out successfully. Friar Andrew says he has brought “a smock-faced cardinal to a madonna secured with a guard more numerous than Argus' eyes” (2.3) and Hidewell claims to “have carried on an amour for the Queen of Spain” and “conveyed her letters made up in wax-candles” (2.3). The Colonel's cuckolding plot, however, finally fails, because the rake, when discovered by the husband, lacks the skills to invent a story that would save his design. The Governor's lady, quite in contrast to the rake, immediately comes up with a convincing story in a similar situation and bluntly lies into her naïve husband's face. This shows that the wife is clearly much more quick-witted than the Colonel, who seems to be more of a witwoud than a true wit.

4.3 The wives' reasons for cuckolding

Lady Fidget in *The Country Wife*, a total hypocrite, is married to a husband who appreciates wealth, business and politics much more than his wife. Canfield notes that “Sir Jasper lacks Cavalier taste, manners, and the ability to value his wife” (127). He is a rich “City knight” (127), showing greater interest in Court and trade than in satisfying his wife's sexual appetite. Lady Fidget clearly refers to this when saying: “Who for his business, from his Wife will run; Takes the best care, to have her bus'ness done” (2.1.721-723). This shows that it is the husbands' own fault if women seek sexual satisfaction outside marriage. Upper-class women are sometimes even forced to breed beneath their rank, that is, to engage in a sexual relationship with men from a lower class, similar to aristocratic men, who satisfy their sexual appetites with prostitutes. The sexual relationship with Horner, however, does not represent interclass adultery, since the rake is an aristocratic town wit (Canfield 128). The patriarchal society forces the ladies to continually stress their honour and virtue, because “intra-class adultery would be bad enough for women, but interclass would be absolute anathema” (Canfield 128). The virtuous ladies do not only share the men's appetite for sex, but also their appetite

for wine. The women bring bottles of red wine to Horner's lodgings and talk frankly about the married lives of women. Lady Fidget even performs a drinking song, in which she openly reveals her true sexual nature and her desire for men, and escapes the role of a virtuous and honourable lady, which society forces on her.

Why should our damn'd tyrants oblige us to live
On the pittance of Pleasure which they only give?
We must not rejoice,
With Wine and with noise.
In vaine we must wake in a dull bed alone,
Whilst to our warm Rival, the Bottle, they're gone.
Then lay aside charms,
And take up these arms. (5.4.31-38)

In the last act, the ladies come to Horner's lodging to entertain him with a masquerade. Heavily drunk, they throw away their masks, damn their husbands and keepers and reveal their miserable situation in a loveless marriage and their unsatisfied sexual desires, as can be seen in the following passage.

DAYN. The filthy Toads chuse Mistresses now, as they do Stuffs, for having
been fancy'd and worn by others.
SQUEAM. For being common and cheap.
LA. FID. Whilst women of quality, like the richest Stuffs, lye untumbled, and
unasked for.
HOR. Ay neat, and cheap, and new often they think best.
DAYN. No Sir, the Beasts will be known by a Mistress longer than by a suit.
(5.4.73-82)

The women of quality laugh uneasily in the end, when discovery is avoided at the last minute. Lady Fidget reminds Horner: "Well Harry Common, I hope you can be true to three, swear, but 'tis no purpose, to require your Oath; for you are as often forsworn, as you swear to new women" (5.4.214-217). The quote shows that Sir Jaspar's wife and the virtuous gang do not mind if Horner pleases the other women as well, as long as he is virile enough to sexually satisfy each of them in the future. Margery, in contrast to the virtuous gang, is not familiar with the pleasures Cavalier town gallants can offer to women. She loves her husband Pinchwife and would not consciously consider harming him in any way. Horner's charming words and kisses, however, raise her interest and curiosity and the fact that he even announces his love, renders him certainly more attractive than Pinchwife. That the ingénue has actually no idea about cuckolding and its consequences for wives, can be seen in the following quote, when she naively insists on

marrying Horner and almost reveals his totally intact potency in front of her husband Pinchwife and Sir Jaspar Fidget.

QUACK. I tell you Sir he has been in *France* since, pray ask but these Ladies and Gentlemen, your friend Mr. *Dorilant*, Gentlemen and Ladies, han't you all heard the late sad report of poor Mr. *Horner*

ALL LAD. Ay, ay, ay.

DOR. Why thou jealous Fool do'st thou doubt it, he's an errant French Capon.

MRS. PIN. 'Tis false Sir, you shall not disparage poor Mr. *Horner*, for to my certain knowledge –

LUCY. O hold –

SQUEAM. Stop her mouth – *Aside to Lucy.*

LA. FID. Upon my honour Sir, 'tis as true. (5.4.447-459)

Lucia in *Sir Patient Fancy* is “eternally plagued with [Sir Patient's] company” (2.1). Her old husband even “dresses and undresses [her]” and “does so smirk at his handywork” (2.1). Lady Fancy desperately tries to find place and time to please her sexual desires with the young gallant Wittmore. Lady Fancy's trustworthy maid Maundy clearly supports the lady's cuckolding designs and gives her the following advice: “Mr. Wittmore's satisfied of your constancy, Madam; thou had I been your Ladyship, I should have given him a more substantial proof, which you might yet do, if you would make handsome use of your time” (2.1). Lucia does not care much when she is finally discovered by her husband, since she has long been in love with Wittmore and entered marriage with Sir Patient solely for financial reasons, as the rake even admits in the end. Wittmore and Lady Fancy are pointedly described as “upper-class parasites”, who cannot finance their lives independently, as the following quote shows (Canfield 147).

SIR PATIENT 'Tis well thou dost confess I am a cuckold, for I would have it known, fair Lady.

LADY FANCY 'Twas to that end I married you, good Alderman.

[...]

WITTMORE Right, Sir, we have long been lovers, but want of fortune made us contrive how to marry her to your good Worship. Many a wealthy citizen, Sir, has contributed to the maintenance of a younger brother's mistress; and you are not the first man in office that has been a cuckold, Sir. (5.1)

Lucia's promiscuous behaviour is subversive to the patriarchal social system, which tries to control women's sexuality in order to secure the inheritance of money and property to blood related offspring. Lady Fancy, however, is not denounced for her licentiousness and for subverting this harsh system of control, but instead, win's the

audience's support and applause for her parasitic behaviour (Canfield 147). Sir Patient can divorce her, but he is unable to prove that she stole his 8000 Pounds. Wittmore and Lady Fancy, however, can cuckold Sir Patient in the future, but they cannot have "a legitimate heir" or "create a place and space of their own" (Canfield in Marshall: 156).

Julia Fulbank in Behn's *The Lucky Chance* was forced to marry Sir Cautious Fulbank for wealth, which she admits when saying "Had I but kept my sacred vows to Gayman, How happy had I been, how prosperous he!" (1.2.34-35). Sir Cautious is not only an ugly, mercenary and crass old banker, who selfishly takes advantage of Gayman's poverty, but also suffers from impotence and, thus, is unable to please his wife sexually. This can be clearly seen in the following quote, when Julia is surprised at Sir Cautious' sudden eagerness to make love.

LADY FULBANK But why tonight? Indeed, you're wondrous kind, methinks.
SIR CAUTIOUS Why, I don't know: a wedding is a sort of an alarm to love; it calls up every man's courage.
LADY FULBANK Aye, but will it come when 'tis called?
SIR CAUTIOUS (*aside*) I doubt you'll find it, to my grief. [*To Lady Fulbank*]
But I think 'tis all one to thee, thou car'st not for my compliment; no, thou'dst rather have a young fellow.
LADY FULBANK I am not used to flatter much; if forty years were taken from your age, 'twould render you something more agreeable to my bed, I must confess. (5.4.1-11)

In contrast to Leticia, the solution to her problematic situation cannot be annulment of the marriage, but infidelity. Right from the very beginning, Julia is clear about her situation as a married woman and its limits. She openly confesses to Sir Cautious that she is in love with a younger man and even admits that the beloved rake is Gayman. Julia clearly hopes for a rich widowhood soon to come, which would enable her to marry Gayman. Adultery is something she does not really believe in and, therefore, would not openly consider. She acts against Sir Cautious' merciless treatment of Gayman by mollifying the rake with money and gold, which she secretly steals from her husband. The mysterious fantasy scene in her chamber functions as a test of Gayman's constancy, which the rake certainly fails. When he later admits that he has slept with another woman, but complains: "But such a carcase 'twas—deliver me—so rivelled, lean, and rough: a canvas bag of wooden ladles were a better bedfellow" (4.1.83-84), Julia is positively surprised about his honesty, but also annoyed that the rake was too distracted to realize that she was, in fact, his benefactress (Canfield 227-229). Julia's virtue, as

Canfield claims, is “not traditional” (229) but “existential” (229), which is shown in the following quote, when she admits that she would cuckold Sir Cautious if it pleased her.

LADY FULBANK What, because I cannot simper, look demure, and justify my honour when none questions it? Cry ‘fie’, and ‘out upon the naughty women’, Because they please themselves?—and so would I.
SIR CAUTIOUS How, would; what, cuckold me?
LADY FULBANK Yes, if it pleased me better than virtue, sir. But I’ll not change my freedom and my humour, To purchase the dull fame of being honest. (5.4.20-27)

If Julia and Gayman will continue to cuckold Sir Cautious in future remains rather doubtful in the end, since Julia is quite disappointed in Gayman’s selfish behaviour and purely economical thinking. It is clear, however, that Sir Feeble will be a future cuckold, since Belmour is Leticia’s rightful husband and true love. Corman states that Leticia, as well as Julia, is treated as a property, which means that she functions as “part of a financial exchange between men” (1997: 266). The romantic lovers’ plot ends in a traditional comic resolution, namely, her joyful re-unity with her destined lover Belmour (Corman 1997: 266).

The social world which is portrayed in Dryden’s *The Kind Keeper* is best described as a society in which “upper- and middle-class women are commodities exchanged between men in a marriage meat market” (Canfield 197). Lower-middle class women, such as the mistress Tricksy, are pointedly illustrated as “fast-food hamburgers sold in ordinaries to momentarily assuage the munchies” (197). Father Aldo informs Woodall about Tricksy: “[...] the kept Mistress I told you of, the Lass of Mettle: but for all she carries it so high, I know her Pedigree; her Mother’s a Semstress in *Dog and Bitch-Yard*, and was, in her Youth, as right as she is” (1.1.272-275). The society in which Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick live does not give them open permission to satisfy their sexual appetites outside marriage. Tricksy, coming from a poor lower-middle class family has no other choice than consenting to become Limberham’s mistress. The old Cit can please her with jewels and money, but certainly not with his apparently failing sexual powers. He admits his early ejaculation when saying “Nay, but dear sweet honey Pug, for give me but this once: it may be any man’s case, when his desires are too vehement” (2.1.78-80). Mrs Brainsick, an upper-middle class woman, was forced to marry a hypocritical witwoud who denies her respect, attention and sexual pleasures, as can be seen in her following description of him: “Like a Clock out of order, set him a

going, and he strikes eternally. Besides, he thinks me such a Fool, that I cou'd half resolve to revenge my self, in justification of my Wit." (3.1.157-159). The handsome and sexually potent rake Woodall, therefore, does not need much effort to persuade the women to engage in adulterous affairs.

Lady Dunce in *The Soldiers' Fortune* is imprisoned in a marriage with the old, parsimonious fool Sir Davy, but does not despair. According to her, husbands "are not meant for bedfellows" (1.2.11-12). Instead, a wife should treat him like a gentleman-usher, who unknowingly drives the rakes into the woman's arms. To Sylvia's question how to make best use of a husband, Clarinda answers: "Instead of a gentleman-usher, for ceremony's sake, to be in waiting on set days and particular occasions" (1.2.16-17). Clarinda was clearly forced to wed Sir Davy, but plays down the unbearable situation in a loveless marriage to an apparently homosexual Cit. That Sir Davy sexually prefers young virile men becomes very clear when he harasses Courtine, Beaugard's friend: "Sirrah, you are a whore, an errant bitch-whore. I'll use you like a whore, I'll kiss you, you jade; I'll ravish you, you buttock" (4.1.420-421). Clarinda is very clear about the fact that Sir Davy is an awfully cruel, loathsome and evil-minded character, once she even addresses him with "Sir Sodom" (3.1.195), and admits that giving up her freedom and her true love Beaugard was indeed a terrible sacrifice.

LADY DUNCE [...] My parents indeed made me say something to him after a priest once, but my heart went not along with my tongue. I minded not what it was. For my thoughts, Sylvia, for these seven years have been much better employed. Beaugard! Ah, curse on the day that first sent him into France!

SYLVIA Why so, I beseech you?

LADY DUNCE Had he stayed here, I had not been sacrificed to the arms of this monument of man, for the bed of death could not be more cold than his has been. He would have delivered me from the monster, for even then I loved him and was apt to think my kindness not neglected. (1.2.51-61)

It is important to note that Lady Dunce engages in an affair with her true love Beaugard and not with an unknown rakish Town-wit. The audience, however, would similarly be on her side if her intended lover was a stranger, since Clarinda's description of Sir Davy's character can only evoke the audience's feelings of pity and sorrow for her. The following quote shows how miserable Clarinda's situation in this loveless marriage to Sir Davy is, and that the husband clearly deserves to be cuckolded.

LADY DUNCE Right, Sylvia; 'tis the best office a husband can do a wife—I mean an old husband. Bless us! To be yoked in wedlock with a paralytic, coughing, decrepit dotterel! To be a dry nurse all one's lifetime to an old child of sixty-five! To lie by the image of death a whole night, a dull immovable that has no sense of life but through its pains! The pigeon's as happy that's laid to a sick man's feet, when the world has given him over. For my part, this shall be my prayer:
Cursed be the memory, nay, double cursed,
Of her that wedded age for interest first. [...] (1.2.129-138)

Arabella's and Eugenia's husbands in *The London Cuckolds* are certainly not as cruel and evil-minded as Sir Davy, but simply foolish, naïve witwounds, who vainly believe to have absolute control over their wives' sexuality. The witty and sexually active, voracious women, however, feel more attracted to the Town wits, portrayed as handsome and potent Tory rakes. The wives' citizen husbands can certainly not meet the women's sexual desires, since they are stupid and spineless impotent Whigs, who interfere in politics and favour trade over their women. The class warfare is clearly illustrated in the play, since it is also the women's, in particular Arabella's, unsatisfied sexual appetite which has a class bias, as can be seen in the following quote (Canfield 86-88).

ARAB. Adieu, husband. A kiss! slender diet to live upon till to morrow this time: I have a months mind to greater dainties, to feast in his absence upon lustier fare than a dull City husband, as insipid and ill relisht as a *Guild hall* – dish on a Lord Mayor's day. Now, *Engine*, if I durst pursue my inclinations with the man you have so often heard me speak of.
ENGINE. A little variety, Madam, wou'd be pleasant; always to feed upon Alderman's flesh is enough to cloy your stomach.
ARAB. He's so sparing on't it can never surfeit me.
ENGINE. Faith, Madam, they that have spare dyet at home may the better be allow'd to look abroad. Troth, Madam, ne'r lose your longing. (1.1)

Eugenia, Arabella and even ignorant Peggy clearly prefer the superior class, which are the town wits, over their dull city husbands. Peggy, for example, has never met a Cavalier town gallant before, but feels immediately attracted to Ramble, when she sees him in the streets, as the following lines illustrate.

AUNT Shove him away, *Peggy*.
PEGGY O, but forsooth Aunt, he's a Gentleman.
AUNT Ay, but a *London* Gentleman; come from him, or he'll bite thee.
PEGGY Deeds, Sir, will you bite me?
RAMBLE Bite thee! not for a thousand Worlds, yet methinks I cou'd eat thee.
(2.2)

To Wiseacre's question whom she met in the street, Peggy answers: "I did not know but it might be the King, they say he is a fine man, Nuncle" (2.2). This clearly shows that Cavalier rakes are likened to royalty and are superior in their looks and behaviour. The only cuckolds made in this play are foolish City Whigs, which is shown in the epilogue spoken by Ramble: "A vision like to that methinks i'th' Pit; I see, and every Cuckold is a Cit. [...] And be it spoke to their eternal Glory's; There's not one Cuckold amongst all the Tory's" (Epilogue), (Canfield 86-88).

The Governor's Lady, similar to Margery Pinchwife, is devoted to her old husband, but quite in contrast to the country wife, enjoys freedom and liberty. The lady ensures her husband: "I warrant ye, Deary, the honest freedom you allow is sufficient: I'll never go farther." (1.1). Confronted with the Colonel's constant advances and charming words, she is finally persuaded and half-heartedly agrees to cuckoldry. Before she, however, agrees to engage in an affair with the Colonel, she amusingly calms her conscience: "Where's the harm to give a worthy begging stranger a little charity from a love's store, when the kind old Governor can never never miss it?" (1.1). Lady Governor, obviously, does not want to take revenge on her husband, but simply is tempted to engage in an affair with a young, handsome Englishman, which resembles a nice distraction from everyday life. Elenora, quite on the other hand, finds herself bound to a mercenary and evil-minded husband. She has every reason to cuckold the Marquess, but the fact that she is imprisoned makes it her primary aim to escape the cruel tormentor. The following quote illustrates her terrible fate.

ELLEN. [...] I am a thing accursed by cruel guardians, for my parents died when I was young; they would not else, sure, have forced me, condemned to an old jealous madman.—I saw his follies and his humors, and I begged, like a poor slave, who views the rack before him,—All in vain; they were inexorable.—so may just Heaven prove to them in their greatest need! (2.1)

4.4 The rakes' reasons for cuckolding

Canfield states that the royalists become tricksters in the comedies, because they were deprived of their estates or had to mortgage them, and were sometimes even forced to sell them off (7). This is due to the fact that the bourgeois Cits misused their power and, legally or illegally, purloined aristocratic lands in the Restoration period (Canfield 84).

Woodall's extensive sexual desire in *The Kind Keeper* is justified by the increased conflict between the royalist Cavaliers and the Roundheads. Woodall clearly represents the superiority of Cavaliers, when he, for example, avoids seduction by the hypocritical Puritan Mrs. Saintly. Woodall cuckolds Limberham because he is an impotent Cit and the witwoud Brainsick, because the latter clearly shows "lack of class not only in the tasteless distillations of his brainpan but also in his crude bullying of his wife and of the primary object of class aggression in the play" (Canfield 82). When Woodall's affair with Tricksy is nearly discovered at the end, the rake offers Limberham: "if you can forgive what's past, your hand, and I'll endeavour to make up the breach betwixt you and your Mistress: if not, I am ready to give you the satisfaction of a Gentleman" (5.1.586-589). The rather passive and spineless Cit finally marries Tricksy and provides her with a sum of four hundred Pounds a year.

The impoverished town wit Beaugard in *The Soldiers' Fortune* is furious about how Restoration society apparently rewards "nouveaux riches and parvenus instead of the younger sons of the aristocracy" (Canfield 85), who have loyally and devotedly served the king and the country of England. Beaugard, "an angrily indigent English soldier, edgily proclaiming his alienation from his society" (Cordner; Clayton: xi), cuckolds Sir Davy not only because he is a disgustingly cruel mercenary old Cit, who took away the soldier's wife, but because he is one of those bourgeois nouveaux riches who openly criticize the king and his loyal soldiers (Canfield 85). As already illustrated in chapter 3.3, Lady Dunce perfectly describes Sir Davy's despicable character as a fool who is "led by the nose by knaves to rail against the kind and the government" (1.2.73-75). Scared that Beaugard's death will cause his imprisonment, Sir Davy starts to pray in Latin. Canfield claims that Dryden thereby shows "the Whigs as really the crypto-Catholics, not the Tories" (86) and that Beaugard's continuing future cuckoldry of Sir Davy illustrates the Cits' "class impotence and defeat" (86). Beaugard also blames Lady Dunce for betraying him by agreeing to marry Sir Davy during his absence, as can be seen in the following lines.

BEAUGARD [...] But when I came home, and found Clarinda lost! How could you think of wasting but a night in the rank, surfeiting arms of this foul-feeding monster, this rotten trunk of a man, that lays claim on you?

LADY DUNCE The persuasion of friends and the authority of parents!

BEAUGARD And had you no more grace than to be ruled by a father and mother?

LADY DUNCE When you were gone, that should have given me better counsel, how could I help myself?

BEAUGARD Methinks then you might have found out some cleaner shift to have thrown away yourself upon, than nauseous old age and unwholesome deformity. (5.3.9-20)

Interestingly, even the country bumpkin Pinchwife is often referred to as a Cit in *The Country Wife*. Canfield describes this constant comparison as “a running analogy between these Country and City fools who obviously deserve to be cuckolded” (127). The fact that Sir Davy planned to murder Beaugard, is a political point Otway makes in order to “justify Royalist paranoias” (Burns 118). The high style of the play’s language makes the audience believe that what is happening on stage is not happening in reality and thus presents horror that cannot be regarded as serious. In Otway’s comedy, similar to *The Country Wife*, it is the rakish man, who is turned into an object. Beaugard’s changes from Sir Davy’s table, to Lady Duncce’s bed and finally to the bathroom in Sir Jolly’s house degrade him to an unwieldy object (Burns 118). Although the rake is a rather passive character, he finally manages to take sexual and political revenge on the Whig Sir Davy. The rake’s revenge is sexual, because the husband stole Beaugard’s future wife and it is political, because the Whigs and the Tories are enemies within the country. England’s natural rulers, which are the Tories such as Beaugard, have now become the slaves of the Whigs, who are spreading anxiety-feeding propaganda and rumours about the execution of the Popish Plot (Cordner; Clayton: xvi-xvii).

Gayman in Behn’s *The Lucky Chance* is impoverished not because he has been robbed of his land like Beaugard, but because he frequently courts his beloved Julia with expensive gifts in order to bribe her into adultery. The rake is finally forced to mortgage his property to Sir Cautious and turns into “an outcast sentimental lover” (Zimbaro 1998: 119). Gayman wants to take sexual and political revenge on the mercenary banker Sir Cautious, and convinces him of considering Julia as worth ‘nothing’, and set her as a prize in the dice-game, as illustrated in the following quote (Canfield 227-228).

GAYMAN [...] I would your lady were worth nothing.

SIR CAUTIOUS Why so, sir?

GAYMAN Then I would set all this against that nothing.

[...]

SIR CAUTIOUS Hum, my wife against three hundred pounds? What, all my wife, sir?

GAYMAN All your wife? Why, sir, some part of her would serve my turn. (4.1.382-389)

Gayman cannot cuckold for reasons of true love, since he treats Julia as an object, as a means of exchange, when saying: “Sir, you’ll take care to see me paid tonight?” (4.1.462). He clearly does not understand that he treats Julia as a prostitute and literally rapes her. Indeed, he addresses Sir Cautious as her pimp when claiming: “‘Tis not in my bargain to solicit her, sir, you are to procure her; or three hundred pounds, sir: choose you whether” (4.1.466-467). The night with Julia was motivated by economic reasons and self-interest. Gayman regards Julia as an object that rightly belongs to him, which is clear in his following claim: “Can you be angry, Julia? Because I only seized my right of love” (5.7.18-19). When Julia hints that she was the woman who pleased him in disguise, Gayman is humiliated and ashamed. He realizes that his egotistical and parsimonious behaviour was the reason why he might have lost Julia forever. This becomes clear when Julia answers to Sir Cautious offer of leaving his Lady and estate to Gayman after his death: “No, sir: you do not like me. ‘A canvas bag of wooden ladles were a better bed-fellow” (5.7.185-186) (Canfield 229). Gayman’s relationship to Sir Cautious clearly illustrates “the fundamental opposition between landowning gentry and financiers”, the former dependant on the latter through credit (Copeland 75). Gayman clearly hates the Cit and accuses him of being “gripping as hell, and as insatiable; worse than a brokering Jew: not all the twelve tribes harbours such a damned extortioner” (4.1.132-133). This perfectly illustrates the link between money and Satan, an image which is dominant throughout the play. Gayman could not bribe Julia with gifts into adultery, but succeeded in buying her from her husband (Copeland 75).

Belmour, “a gentleman nearly out of tragicomic romance” (Canfield 225), killed a man in a duel and therefore was forced to go into exile in order to avoid a trial and left his future wife Leticia back in London. During Belmour’s absence, the alderman Sir Feeble tricks Leticia into marriage by buying Belmour’s pardon and keeping it secret, and falsely claims that Belmour has committed suicide at The Hague. The rake, convinced to free Leticia from the Whig Cit’s hands, enters the house in the disguise of Sir Feeble’s nephew Francis and learns the truth. Belmour is determined to prevent marital sex, since “the consummation were adultery” (2.2.54), as Leticia truly claims. Belmour’s use of a heroic tone is rather atypical of Town wits. His religious language makes Sir Feeble confess and repent in the end and the loving couple receives Sir Feeble’s consent. Belmour, who could “represent the legitimate monarch” (Canfield

225-227), takes political and personal revenge on “trothbreakers” (Canfield 227) such as Sir Feeble. Originally, Belmour seems defenceless against Sir Feeble’s political and financial power which even led to the extinguishing of the rake’s existence. Sir Feeble, similar to Sir Davy, usurps Belmour’s place and is therefore cuckolded in the end.

Camillus in *The Spanish Wives*, similar to Belmour, tries to free his rightful wife Elenora out of the cruel Marquess’ hands. The resolution in Pix’s sentimental comedy, in contrast to all other analysed plays, is not cuckolding, but divorce, promised by the Cardinal. Camillus tells Elenora: “[...] –safe in a monastery thou shalt remain, till the dispute is ended. And then–Oh! thou blest charmer–then all my sufferings shall be liberally paid; [...]” (3.4). The addressing of divorce reflects the “rising debate about the legal status of women and reform of the divorce laws” (Hume 1983: 176) around 1700. The English Colonel Peregrine, very much in contrast to Camillus, simply wants to seize his chance and bed a beautiful woman, who luckily enjoys liberty and freedom in her marriage. He does not want to take any kind of revenge on the kind Governor, and luckily is finally offered to inherit his wife and estate after the Governor’s death. The following quote illustrates how very different the rakes’ intentions are.

C A M. Ah Colonel! our cases are very different,—you hunt but for enjoyment, the huddled raptures of a few tumultuous moments:—But I am in quest of virgin-beauty, made mine by holy vows; constrained by fiends, instead of friends, to break the sacred contract, and follow the *capriccio* of a mad old man.—Virgin did I call her?—By Heaven, I dare believe she is one, at least her mind is such;—and were she in my power, I’d soon convince the world of the justice of my cause. (3.1)

Wittmore and Lady Fancy have long been lovers and planned the marriage to Sir Patient in order to rob him of his money and turn him into a cuckold. Wittmore is not rich enough to marry Lady Fancy, which is why she consented to marry Sir Patient for purely economic reasons. The rake is fixed on receiving Sir Patient’s fortunes, which can be seen in the following quote, when he opens the basket which he assumes to contain the money Lucia has stolen from Sir Patient: “Good morrow to the day, and next the gold; Open the shrine, that I may see my saint—Hail the world’s soul, [...]” (5.1). The rake Lodwick shows different reasons for cuckolding Sir Patient. It is clear that Lodwick does not plan the cuckolding act, but simply seizes his chance to have sex with beautiful Lady Fancy. However, it can be assumed that the rake, similar to Lucia and Wittmore, despises Sir Patient, since the Cit wants to prevent Lodwick’s marriage

with his daughter Isabella. Sir Patient's plan to marry her to a wealthy man is purely motivated by economic interest and his personal aversion against Lodwick's mother, the learned Lady Knowell. The audience, therefore, is surprised to see that Lodwick initially hesitates to sleep with Lucia. The rake's only reason, however, is that he believes her to be Isabella and he would not cuckold himself and bed his future wife before marriage, as the following quote illustrates.

LADY FANCY. Are you bewitched? What is't that frights you?

LODWICK. I'm fixed. Death, was ever such a lover? Just ready for the highest joys of love, And like a bashful girl restrained by fear Of an ensuing infamy—I hate to cuckold my own expectations.

[...]

LADY FANCY. What ails you? Are you mad?—we are safe, and free as winds let loose to ruffle all the groves; what is't delays you then? Soft.

LODWICK. Pox o' this thought of wife, the very name destroys my appetite.

Oh, with what vigor I could deal my love

To some fair lewd unknown, To whom I'd never made a serious vow! (3.4)

The rake Woodall in *The Kind Keeper* learns at the beginning of the play that Mrs Saintly's bawdy boarding-house is full of whores and sexually voracious women, and consequently eagerly starts to inquire about his potential sexual prey. In the following quote Mrs Saintly, the hypocritical Puritan landlady, unconsciously reveals the women's burning sexual desires.

WOOD. Oh, very good! Two more young Women besides your self and both handsom?

SAINT. [...] you must not cast your eyes upon 'em, nor listen to their Conversation: you are already chosen for a better work.

WOOD. I warrant you, let me alone: I am chosen, I.

SAINT. They are a couple of alluring wanton Minxes.

WOOD. Are they very alluring, say you? very wanton?

SAINT. You appear exalted, when I mention those Pit-falls of Iniquity.

WOOD. Who, I exalted? Good faith, I am as sober, a melancholy poor Soul! — (1.1.141-152)

The cuckolds made by Woodall are part of the Whigs who took over political power and due to their recently, illegally or legally, gained wealth, wed women who are forced to marry for money. Since Woodall was deprived of political and financial power, it is only sexual power that the Cavalier libertine Woodall can reserve for himself. His virility makes him superior to the witwounds, who are presumably impotent and unable to please their wives sexually. Cuckolding is a means for Woodall to satisfy his sexual

needs and to take revenge on the Cits, who do not deserve to be in power, but clearly deserve to be cuckolded. Amusingly, it is due to their own fault that they end up as cuckolds, since both ask Woodall to make the other man wear horns.

Horner's cuckolding intrigues with Margery Pinchwife and Lady Fidget in *The Country Wife* cannot be regarded as totally similar and are not necessarily motivated by the same reasons. Margery, a young naive country-bred girl, is driven into Horner's arms by her notoriously jealous husband, whose unwise actions to keep his wife solely to himself backfire in the end. Horner is astonished when Pinchwife leads Margery, disguised as Alithea, to his lodgings and almost spoils the plot by disclosing the girl's real identity. Horner's cuckolding plan was initially targeted at self-centred city husbands, such as Sir Jaspar Fidget (Corman 59-60). Wycherley does not offer any acceptable solutions to the moral issues presented in the play. Characters like Horner and the virtuous gang remain unchanged in the end and do not receive any punishment for their actions. They are thus likely to keep their hypocritical behaviour and continue with their affairs in the future (Corman 60-61). Horner regards cuckolding as a sport, like hunting, it is a means to while away his time and exert his superiority.

The Cavalier rakes in Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*, show similar sexual virility as Woodall and Horner, but suffer from the restraints society has forced on their lives. They clearly hate the Cits, since they took away their political power, land, money and wives. Townly distracts himself with alcohol and whores, and even Ramble is about to turn to the bottle, although he is aware how alcohol can change a person, when saying: "If I shou'd keep company but one week with thee, *Franck Townly*, and drink as we did yesterday, I shou'd be fit neither for the company of women nor men" (1.1). Loveday was robbed of his true love Eugenia, who married the Whig Dashwell for wealth. The rakes are superior to the husbands in manners, wit and virility, and it is only through cuckolding that they can exert this superiority and take revenge on the husbands, who are addressed by Ramble in the epilogue: "Haste hence like Bees, unto your City Hives, And drive away the Hornets from your wives" (Epilogue).

5 Tricks, deception and means of disguise

In the seventeenth century, as Holland explains, “disguise became a matter of cosmic significance, a fundamental element in ethical and metaphysical thought” (45), which was mainly a result of the new physics. In order to explain the meaning of disguise in Restoration drama, it is important to look at the attitude of Restoration society towards dissembling, affectation and pretence (Holland 45). In addition, this chapter will look at the reasons why appearance hardly ever corresponded with nature in the Restoration comedies and often also in Restoration society.

A woman’s appearance and behaviour was very carefully examined in the Restoration period, due to the widespread belief that a woman’s exterior showed her “social or spiritual identity” (Pritchard 31). The exterior, however, could also be seen as a mask and a means of disguise. The patriarchal society often made it necessary for women to make a clear difference between what they were and how they appeared. Women were expected to be totally self-evident in their behaviour, an urge which was meant to assist men’s aspirations of gaining perfect understanding of the opposite sex. It does not mean, however, that Restoration society was totally against women’s disguise (Pritchard 31-33). This is shown, for example, in Restoration comedy, which “is preoccupied with masks and disguises” (Pritchard 32). The female playwright Aphra Behn, for instance, portrayed women who did not follow the rules of conduct books and developed a theatrical persona which was “received enthusiastically, if also somewhat punitively” (Pritchard 33). Restoration London provided a number of places where women could display themselves publicly, for example, in playhouses, coffeehouses, piazzas, markets, dancing schools and churches. However, the only condition under which women could do so was if their physical appearance assured honesty and integrity (Pritchard 33). Men’s anxiety of their wives’ and daughters’ appearance in public places and their meeting with debauched rakes is shown in the following quote from Aphra Behn’s comedy *The Lucky Chance*.

SIR FEEBLE [...] Ever while you live, keep a wife ignorant, unless a man be as brisk as his neighbours.

SIR CAUTIOUS A wise man will keep ‘em from bawdy christenings then, and gossipings.

SIR FEEBLE Christenings and gossipings! Why, they are the very schools that debauch our wives, as dancing-schools do our daughters. (2.2.118-124)

5.1 Behaviour and appearance as a means of disguise

As already mentioned, to receive full comprehension about a woman's character, a man thoroughly examined her exterior. In other words, men tried to read and interpret female bodily signs in order to arrive at an understanding of their inner character. **Behavioural signs**, on the other hand, were thought to be unreliable and were open to a great number of possible interpretations, because behaviour could be easily changed and falsified. The reliance on behavioural signs led to a rather dangerous relativistic notion of personal identity. To put it differently, if identity is measured by behaviour, a person only has to act accordingly. Lady Fidget and Horner in *The Country Wife* make perfect use of this kind of superficiality, which was typical of the Restoration age (Pritchard 37-38). It is particularly the hypocritical Lady Fidget and her virtuous gang who constantly claim their honour and virtue in an exaggerated way. The following conversation between Lady Fidget and Horner shows that both characters use the word honour, however, they do not address its real meaning, which leads to a string of double entendres. The "wicked censorious [Restoration] world", as Lady Fidget claims, forces her to pretend virtue and chastity in order to keep her adulterous liaisons secret.

LA. FID. Well *Horner*, am not I a woman of Honour? you see I'm as good as my word.

HOR. And you shall see Madam, I'll not be behind hand with you in honour; and I'll be as good as my word too, if you please but to withdraw into the next room.

LA. FID. But first, my dear Sir, you must promise to have a care of my dear Honour.

HOR. If you talk a word more of your Honour, you'll make me incapable to wrong it; to talk of Honour in the mysteries of Love, is like talking of Heaven, or the Deity in an operation of Witchcraft, just when you are employing the Devil, it makes the charm impotent.

[...]

LA. FID. But you can't blame a Lady of my reputation to be chary.

HOR. Chary – I have been chary of it already, by the report I have caus'd of my self.

LA. FID. Ay, but if you shou'd ever let other women know that dear secret, it would come out; nay, you must have a great care of your conduct; for my acquaintance are so censorious, (oh, 'tis wicked censorious world, Mr. *Horner*) I say, are so censorious, and detracting, that perhaps they'll talk to the prejudice of my Honour, though you shou'd not let them know the dear secret. (4.3.45-59; 68-80)

Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick in Dryden's *The Kind Keeper* also refer to their honour and virtue, but certainly not as frequently as Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang.

Interestingly, both the mistress and the wife remind Woodall of their honourable reputation, shortly before they agree to engage in adulterous sex with the rake. To Tricksy's outcry: "But my Reputation!", Woodall frankly remarks: "Nay, that's no Argument" (2.1.261-262) and to Mrs Brainsick's question: "Is it nothing, do you think, for a Woman of Honour, to overcome the tyes of Vertue and Reputation; [...]?" (3.1.128-129), Woodall philosophically answers with a Cavalier-attitude that it is a woman's honourable reputation that counts in Restoration society and not honourable behaviour. As the following quote shows, Woodall knows that it is the rake's responsibility to secure the wife's unblemished reputation. The bond between passionate lovers is as strong as the bond between the king and his subjects.

WOOD. But, my comfort is, that Love has overcome. Your Honour is, in other words, but your good Repute; and 'tis my part to take care of that: for the Fountain of a Womans Honour is in the Lover, as that of the Subject is in the King. (3.1.132-135)

The Lady Governor in Pix's sentimental comedy *The Spanish Wives* very rarely refers to her reputation in society. When she agrees to the cuckolding act, she also reminds the Colonel: "But sure you would not be such a naughty man to ruin me, if I did" (2.2), which means that the preservation of her reputation is in the rake's hands and that she begs him not to ruin it. When the cuckolding plot is discovered and the wife ensures the Governor: "Indeed, indeed, Deary, I'm glad my honor's safe;—I never had an inclination before, and never will again, if you forgive me" (3.4), the Governor, as well as the audience, feels that it is honestly meant and that the wife can be trusted in the future.

The sexually promiscuous Lady Fancy in *Sir Patient Fancy* pretends to be in love with her presumably dying husband, when saying "Oh my dear Love, my Live, my Joy, my All, (*Cries.*) Oh, let me go; I will not live without him" (5.1). It is interesting to note that in contrast to Lady Fidget, Lucia hardly ever claims her honour and virtue in the play. It is only once that the licentious woman addresses her 'modesty', when bluntly lying into her husband's face: "But, Sir, to hide the weakness of your daughter, I have a little strained my modesty,— [...] 'Tis Isabella's lover, Sir, whom I've concealed" (3.7). This lie serves her purpose to avoid discovery of her sexual act with Lodwick, when her husband unexpectedly comes into the room. The reason why she never claims her honour may be that she is well aware of her promiscuous and disloyal character. Lady Fancy is, obviously, preoccupied with stealing Sir Patient's money, getting rid of her

husband and plotting the cuckolding act with Wittmore, as can be seen in the following quote.

LADY FANCY. Oh, how I tremble at the dismal apprehension of being discovered! Had I secured myself of the eight thousand pound, I would not value Wittmore's being seen. But now to be found out would call my wit in question, for 'tis the fortunate alone are wise. – (4.4)

Behn's Lady Fulbank in *The Lucky Chance*, similar to Lady Fancy, does not constantly assert her honourable character. Her reasons, however, are different, since she regards the constant referring to honour and virtue as contemptible, dishonest and hypocritical behaviour. Julia "[prizes her] honour more than life" (1.2.15), but she will never "change [her] freedom and [her] humour, To purchase the dull fame of being honest" (5.4.26-27). When Sir Cautious concludes that her free mind is rather suspicious, she wittily replies in a self-assured way: "What, because I cannot simper, look demure, and justify my honour when none questions it?" (5.4.20-21). It is particularly interesting that it is Sir Cautious who tricks her into the adulterous act with Gayman. Julia, disappointed and disgraced, confronts her husband: "Why have you left my honour thus unguarded?" (5.7.43). Leticia's claim of honour, like Lady Fulbank's, is honest, when she says about herself: "She cannot from the paths of honour rove, Whose guide's religion, and whose end is love" (3.2.72-73), which shows that she wants to stay faithful to Belmour, her lawful husband.

Elenora in *The Spanish Wives*, never addresses her honour in the play, but it is clear to the audience that, similar to Leticia, she will stay loyal to her rightful husband Camillus, since she knows that "Camillus is honourable" (3.5). Lady Duncie in Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune* hardly ever claims her honour or virtue. In contrast to Elenora, she has an active part in the play, and successfully convinces Sir Davy of Beaugard's death, when saying: "Bear me away, O send me hence far off, where my unhappy name may be a stranger, and this sad accident no more remembered to my dishonour" (4.3.58-60). She accuses Sir Davy of having ruined her honour by committing the crime of killing Beaugard. Wycherley's Margery Pinchwife does not insist on her virtue and honour, simply because she is kept ignorant and therefore has no idea about these notions. Peggy in *The London Cuckolds*, who is like Margery a young ingénue from the country, has also never been instructed about town life, its conventions and social rules.

Bodily signs, in contrast to behavioural signs, were seen as more inalienable and could be less easily manipulated. Moreover, “bodily signs more strongly asserted the importance of birth to identity” (Pritchard 39). It is difficult to draw a clear-cut distinction between behavioural and bodily signs and, therefore, areas of overlap exist. Restoration society believed that clothes reveal the person who wears them. Interestingly, “clothing [...] was subject to affectation” and “its behavioural component compromised its bodily authenticity” (Pritchard 40). This is particularly true for the portrayal of many fops in Restoration comedy, whose clothing is often exaggerated with too many ribbons and therefore, in addition to their inadequate artificial foppish behaviour, becomes the object of ridicule. Restoration society also shared the belief that a woman’s eyes were “the most significant and incorruptible part of her face” (Pritchard 41), since the eyes, in contrast to her tongue, could not lie or deceive. However, eyes could also be commanded and some people claimed that a woman could use her eyes in order to rule the eyes of those who observed her. Blushing was another bodily sign in a woman and commonly understood as signifying virtue and honour, since it was seen as an unintentional action revealing an innocent character. Face-painting was used to hide blushing and, thus, to hide true feelings and emotions. Opponents regarded face-painting as forgery and blasphemy, which was committed by hypocrites (Pritchard 41-42). The vizard mask, a popular device in the period, enabled women to hide their faces and their true identity. Indeed, the mask was meant to hide what was behind, namely, a woman’s facial beauty or lack of it, which clearly had an essential effect on her success in life. It is noted that in theory the mask was meant as a device for modest and meek women, who would be ashamed to show their bare face in public. However, women wearing masks in playhouses, for example, were soon stigmatized as corrupted and false. The use of language, of course, was also a common means to hide a person’s true identity, and will be therefore more thoroughly examined in chapter **Fehler!** **Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** (Pritchard 43-46).

As regards blushing, it is interesting to note that only a few number of wives show frequent blushes in the comedies. Leticia in *The Lucky Chance*, for example, often blushes, for example, when thinking about how Francis reminds her of her love Belmour: “There’s something in his face so like my Belmour, it calls my blushes up, and leaves my heart defenceless” (1.3.171-172). When the old comic lecher Sir Feeble, unable to control his sexual desires, wants to bed her, she tries to avoid it by

exclaiming: “To bed, sir? What, by daylight? for that’s hasting on. I would not for the world: the night would hide my blushes, but the day would let me see myself in your embraces” (3.6.63-65). Indeed, the ugly old man’s obsession with sex and his disgusting sexual fantasies might even have embarrassed the audience, as the following quote shows.

LETICIA You are so wanton, sir, you make me blush. I will not go to bed, unless you’ll promise me—

SIR FEEBLE No bargaining, my little hussy. What, you’ll tie my hands behind me, will you? (5.2.9-12)

The mistress Tricksy in Dryden’s *The Kind Keeper*, certainly not as virtuous as Leticia, pretends to blush at Woodall’s wish for sexual intercourse: “But I’m so shame-fac’d! Well, I’ll go in, and hide my Blushes” (2.1.265-266). The clever rake, however, well aware of her true promiscuous nature, mocks her blushing and feigned shyness, when answering: “I’ll not be long after you; for I think I have hidden my Blushes where I shall never find ‘em” (2.1.267-268). The Governor’s Lady in *The Spanish Wives* exclaims: “I am covered o’er with blushes!” (2.2), when the Colonel reveals that he wished to “seal [his] vows upon [her] melting lips” (2.2). What makes Elenora blush is not rapturous kisses, but merely a fast embrace by Camillus, who exclaims with charming words: “thou choicest blessing of my youth” (3.6). Although Elenora was tricked into marriage by the Marquess, she still feels ashamed to be in another man’s arms: “Witness my heart, which strongly beats, how much I’m pleased in my Camillus’s arms! But, Oh! I blush, when I remember I am another’s wife“ (3.6). It seems that she is a truly honourable woman.

Vizard masks are also used by some of the adulterous wives in the comedies analysed. In Dryden’s *The Kind Keeper* Woodall cleverly disguises Mrs Brainsick as Tricksy in order for her not to be discovered by her own husband. Woodall tells Mrs Brainsick to put on Tricksy’s gown, but Mrs Brainsick wants to be absolutely safe: “I’ll put on my Vizer-Mask however, for more security” (5.1.68-69). Similarly, Lady Fidget in *The Country Wife* cries for her mask in order not to be discovered by Pinchwife in Horner’s lodgings. As the following quote amusingly illustrates, Sir Jaspar wonders why she makes such a fuss, since he is with her and, thus, secures her honour. The reason may be that Lady Fidget knows that Pinchwife has not yet heard about the rumours of Horner’s presumed impotence and might therefore discover her intrigue.

LA . FID . O Lord here's a man, Sir *Jaspar*, my Mask, my Mask, I would not be seen here for the world.
SIR JAS . What not when I am with you?
LA . FID . No, no my honour – let's be gone.
SQUEAM . Oh Grandmother, let us be gone, make hast, make hast, I know not how he may censure us.
LA . FID . Be found in the lodging of any thing like a man, away. (4.3.291-299)

The most brilliant scene in *The Country Wife* is probably in the last act when Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang come to Horner's lodging and entertain him with a masquerade. The women drink heavily, perform songs and reveal the truth about their miserable life in loveless marriage and their unmet sexual desires. The following quote perfectly illustrates that by throwing off their masks, the women also throw off their pretence and hypocritical behaviour, and reveal their innermost desires.

DAYN . Dear Brimmer, well in token of our openness and plain dealing, let us throw our Masques over our heads.
HOR . So 'twill come to the Glasses anon.
SQUEAM . Lovely Brimmer, let me enjoy him first.
LA . FID . No, I never part with a Gallant, till I've try'd him. Dear Brimmer that mak'st our Husbands short sighted.
DAYN . And our bashful gallants bold.
SQUEAM . And for want of a Gallant, the Butler lovely in our eyes, drink Eunuch.
LA . FID . Drink thou representative of a Husband, damn a Husband.
DAYN . And as it were a Husband, an old keeper.
SQUEAM . And an old Grandmother.
HOR . And an English Bawd, and a French Chirurgion. (5.4.47-63)

It is noted that “legibility endured as a nostalgic and utopian fantasy” (Pritchard 47), which was seen as an ideal that women in the Restoration period were urged to aspire to. This ideal finds its assertion in many Restoration comedies, either in an exaggerated, or in a more simplified way, as the illustrations above show (Pritchard 47). Appearance was clearly separated from nature in “Restoration manners, morals, pranks, politics, science, and literary and linguistic theory” (Holland 57). The central elements of Restoration comedies, namely, “clothing, cosmetics, manners, social rules, similitudes, disguise, deception, affectation, dissimulation [and] reputation” (Holland 57) took on special meaning in the Restoration period.

5.2 Mistaken identity

Generally speaking, masking, disguises and mistaken identity are omnipresent in Restoration comedy. In Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, for example, Margery is forced by Pinchwife to act as her 'brother' and Harcourt convincingly acts as a parson, his presumed twin brother, in order to prevent Alithea's and Sparkish's marriage (Hume 137). A special favourite were females in disguise of a male, such as Margery Pinchwife, which provided situations for actresses to show off their legs and thus allowed "a special mode of lover's banter" (Hume 137).

Belmour in *The Lucky Chance* disguises himself as Sir Feeble's nephew for a very serious reason. Because of Sir Feeble's manipulation of important documents, which includes the letter stating that Belmour was hanged and another one containing his pardon, the rake's real identity is somehow erased. As Sir Feeble's nephew, however, Belmour does not only have to do business, but also to assist him in dressing and undressing in his chamber, which can be seen in the comical scene quoted below (Copeland 69-70).

SIR FEEBLE So, so, they're gone. Come, Francis, you shall have the honour of undressing me for the encounter; but 'twill be a sweet one, Francis.
BELMOUR (*aside, undressing [Sir Feeble] all the while*) Hell take him, how he teases me!
SIR FEEBLE But is the young rogue laid, Francis; is she stolen to bed? What tricks the young baggages have to whet a man's appetite!
BELMOUR Aye, sir [*Aside*] Pox on him; he will raise my anger up to madness, and I shall kill him to prevent his going to bed to her.
SIR FEEBLE A pise of those bandstrings! The more haste the less speed.
BELMOUR [*aside*] Be it so in all things, I beseech thee, Venus! (3.1.13-25)

In order to save Leticia from the consummation of marriage with Sir Feeble, the rake appears in the wife's chamber from behind the bed-curtains as his own ghost. Belmour, very amusingly, frightens Sir Feeble with "a mock-tragic performance as his own ghost" (Copeland 70). The picture is hilarious: Beaugard, wearing a bloody shirt and holding a knife in his hands, using a heroic tone in a loud and angry voice, as can be seen in the following quote (Copeland 69-70).

BELMOUR I'th' utmost borders of the earth I'll find thee,
Seas shall not hide thee, nor vast mountains guard thee.
Even in the depth of hell I'll find thee out,

And lash thy filthy and adulterous soul. (5.2.44-47)

What renders the situation mock-tragic, that is, more comic than serious, is that the rake does not kill Sir Feeble, but makes him a future cuckold: “No, you had rather yet go on in sin: Thou wouldst live on, and be a baffled cuckold” (5.2.62-63) (Copeland 70).

Behn’s second triangle between Julia, Gayman and Sir Cautious makes “extensive use of scenic apparatus and other theatrical signifiers, notably sound and costume” (Copeland 70). The most spectacular scene is probably in act three when Julia tests Gayman’s fidelity, but the rake mistakes her true identity. Copeland notes that “Julia’s ‘masque’ is a courtly fantasy that attempts to create an illusion of female erotic power” (71). Julia feels not only responsible for her miserable situation in her loveless marriage, but also for Gayman’s poverty, which he initially tried to conceal from his love. The masque created by Julia draws the characters more and more into the world of commerce, instead of providing an escape from it. The fantastical performance entertains Gayman with a song about the power of love and nymphs and shepherds dancing. The scene is meant to be very private, since only Pert and Bredwell are involved. The action, however, stops shortly before the bedchamber is actually reached. In Julia’s private fantastical entertainment, gold is intended as a present and not as a payment. This shows that the wife wants to separate her relationship to Gayman from the relationship to her husband, the latter purely based on economic reasons. Since the aim of Julia’s masque is to bed Gayman, she could be regarded as a sexually aggressive woman, despite her claims of only wanting to test Gayman’s constancy. The masque functions as a means to escape social reality and puts her into a position of power (Copeland 72-74). The fact that Julia’s identity remains anonymous in the masque enables her to keep her reputation of a virtuous and loyal wife. Her outraged reaction at Gayman’s bed-trick later on is anything but comic, since it is full of fury, accusations, weeping and disappointment (Copeland 77). Copeland explains that “despite his sexual potency, the genteel libertine no longer offers a vigorous alternative to the embourgeoisement of society, but is contaminated by the values of his opponents” (Copeland 77)

Woodall in *The Kind Keeper* takes on another identity in order not to be identified by his father, Aldo. Aldo kindly trusts Woodall and, amusingly, treats him in exactly the same way a whoremaster would treat his own son. In order not to be discovered by

Limberham, Tricksy orders Woodall to pretend to be her Italian merchant of essences. The fact that his Italian is broken and barely understandable, does not discover their plan, since Limberham is a foppish witwoud, who does not see what is obvious, namely that Tricksy is full of desire for Woodall. Wittmore in Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* follows Lucia's advice and pretends to be Mr Fainlove, a wealthy suitor who courts Sir Patient's daughter Isabella. Similar to Woodall, this serves as a means to cuckold her husband, but also leads to much confusion and fast actions in the play. Wittmore is not a master at role-playing, but successfully manages to trick the foolish Sir Patient, who unknowingly provides the rake with the right information. There are, of course, many other instances of mistaken identities in the comedies, some very hilarious ones, as for example Loveday's disguise as a merchant in *The London Cuckolds* or the servant Hidewell in *The Spanish Wives*, who convincingly plays a country fellow. To go into more detail here, however, would not serve the purpose and exceed the scope of this study.

6 The meaning of language in the comedies

With regard to language in the Restoration comedies, Holland states that in contrast to pre-Restoration writings, “language became thin and spare” (57) and that ‘similitudes’ were used instead of elaborate metaphors (Holland 57). The playwrights’ distrust of metaphor developed most likely “through literary connections with the scientific Royal Society” (Holland 53). Language was no longer seen as carrying divinely established meaning, but, quite on the contrary, was now understood “as a purely human instrument of communication” (Munns 2000: 152). To be more precise, language in the Restoration period was not only regarded as a means to make societies cohere, but also as the cause of disagreement and confusion. This anxiety is clearly reflected in the Restoration comedies, where “language [becomes] arbitrary and meaning subjective” (Munns 2000: 152). Indeed, what is portrayed in the comedies, as for example in Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, is a world in which the meaning of people’s words and appearances is clearly reversed. Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang regard hypocrisy as a normal way of social behaviour, which can be seen in the following quote, where the women reveal their hypocritical behaviour to Horner and show that the meaning of words, such as reputation or modesty, becomes subjective (Munns 2000: 152).

L A . F I D . Our Reputation, Lord! Why should you not think, that we women make use of our Reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion; our virtue is like the State-man’s Religion, the Quakers Word, the Gamesters Oath, and the Great Man’s Honour, but to cheat those that trust us.

S Q U E A M . And that Demureness, Coyness, and Modesty, that you see in our Faces in the Boxes at Plays, is as much a sign of a kind woman, as a Vizard-mask in the Pit.

D A Y N . For I assure you, women are least mask’d, when they have the Velvet Vizard on. (5.4.119-131)

The quote above also illustrates that, as Hughes explains, “demands of social existence persistently exercise the characters’ minds and shape their vocabulary” (1996: 138). It is not only the language of social morality which is destroyed in Wycherley’s comedy, but also the vocabulary of common and verifiable knowledge, when, for instance, Lady Fidget and Horner use the word civil, but do not address its commonly understood meaning. The word ‘civil’, as the following passage shows, is frequently misused in an ironic way in the play (Hughes 1996: 138).

HOR. Nay, Madam, I beseech you stay, if it be but to see, I can be as civil to Ladies yet, as they wou'd desire.
LA. FID. No, no, foh, you cannot be civil to Ladies.
DAIN. You as civil as Ladies wou'd desire.
LA. FID. No, no, no, foh, foh, foh. (1.1.165-170)

The quote above shows that “the doubleness of the sign”, as Hughes argues, “corresponds to the doubleness of human nature” (1996: 139). What is particularly interesting is that although sexuality is denied by social rules, it occurs as the hidden meaning in many of the double entendres in Restoration plays, such as in the word ‘civil’ as illustrated above. The verb ‘communicate’, in Pinchwife’s claim: “Why my Wife has communicated Sir, as your Wife may have done too Sir, if she knows him Sir–“ (5.4.367-369), not only implies verbal, but also sexual communication (Hughes 1996: 139).

Many Restoration comedies of the late 1670s and 1680s, particularly those of Thomas Otway and Aphra Behn, portray subjective worlds, in which the meaning of language becomes arbitrary. The distrust in language and in the verification of its meaning can be clearly linked to the political and ideological crisis of the Restoration aristocratic culture, since the plays represent a sceptical reaction to Puritan dogmatism (Munns 2000: 152-155). In the following part, the language of the adulterous wives, the rake-heroes and the cuckolded husbands will be analysed in this light of the sexual moral double standard and of the social and political power struggles in the Restoration period. In addition, the sexual meanings of double entendres and the use of metaphors and similes, especially those targeted at women, will be illustrated.

6.1 The language of adulterous wives

A number of female characters in Restoration comedies, as for example, Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang in *The Country Wife*, obviously show a rather masculine and rakish way of using language and “the more seductive their speech and duplicitous their actions” (Gill 2000: 194-195) become, the more the women represent a threat to the traditional spheres of “masculine social and discursive power” (Gill 2000: 194-195). It is particularly the witty and sexually experienced women who blur the boundaries of gender and sexuality with their seductive language and treacherous actions. The satire in the comedies, therefore, works in a gendered manner, since in Restoration society

masculinity is associated with linguistic and sexual power and femininity is linked with discursive and social weakness. Women who enter masculine spheres in the comedies, are often humiliated and forced to return to feminine grounds (Gill 2000: 194-195). In Wycherley's play, however, the women's infidelity and hypocrisy is not exposed publicly, and, therefore, they are likely to engage in adulterous actions in the future.

As already illustrated in chapter 5, the banquet scene in *The Country Wife* portrays hypocritical women who throw off their masks in private and adopt a very masculine speech and behaviour. In other words, the scene shows that "women are able to dispense with feminine decorum, drinking and boasting of sexual conquests in a manner that is customarily the privilege of the male" (Hughes 1996: 144), which can be seen in the following quote, when the women raise their glasses and demand their right to have sex with Horner.

SQUEAM. Lovely Brimmer, let me enjoy him first.

LA. FID. No, I never part with a Gallant, till I've try'd him. Dear Brimmer that mak'st our Husbands short sighted.

DAYN. And our bashful gallants bold.

SQUEAM. And for want of a Gallant, the Butler lovely in our eyes, drink Eunuch. (5.4.51-57)

It is worth noting that Margery's language in Wycherley's play, similar to Peggy's in *The London Cuckolds*, stands very much in contrast to those of the experienced, witty and sexually promiscuous ladies. Margery's speech, quite fitting for her naïve character, is largely monosyllabic and she often uses baby-talk with Pinchwife, which indicates the young wife's vulnerability. The simplicity of her syntax could be compared to the simplicity of her country background, and clearly reflects her lack of education. The following quote portrays her childlike and artless style of language (Chadwick 120-121).

MRS. PIN. Oh my dear, dear Bud, welcome home; why dost thou look so fropish, who has nanger'd thee?

MR. PIN. You're a Fool.

Mrs. PINCH. goes aside, & cries.

ALITH. Faith, so she is, for crying for no fault, poor tender Creature!

MR. PIN. What you wou'd have her as impudent as your self, as errant a Jilflirt, a gadder, a Magpy, and to say all a meer notorious Town-Woman? (2.1.41-49)

Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* also portrays the linguistic vulnerability of women as, for example, in the character of Lady Fancy, who has been deprived of "her legitimate right to love and sex" (Hughes 1996: 214). Lucia's susceptibility is, for example, reflected in her husband's behaviour towards her, when he states: "Was ever so prodigal a harlot?" (5.1), and indeed she is made a prostitute by Lodwick. The adulterous acts, which are supposed to provide an escape of her loveless marriage, show her vulnerability, since her thoughts can only revolve around Wittmore. In the following quote, Lady Fancy feels that her language is reduced to a compliant utterance: "All my whole soul is taken up with Wittmore; I've no ideas, no thoughts but of Wittmore, and sure my tongue can speak no other language, but his name" (3.4). The conventions of language in this world support the power structures established by men, which puts women at a clear disadvantage and makes it hard for them to succeed (Hughes 1996: 213-215). The bedroom scene in *The Lucky Chance*, as in Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*, stresses "the physical and linguistic vulnerability" (Hughes 1996: 323) of the female protagonist. In both plays, the bedroom trick follows a scene that draws attention to the women's linguistic susceptibility. In the dice game, Julia turns into the victim of "the male tongue and the male hand" (Hughes 1996: 324). When she asks what Sir Cautious and Gayman are playing for, she merely receives "Nothing, nothing" (4.1.437) as an answer. This statement leaves her in ignorance about the situation, similar to Sir Jaspar Fidget in *The Country Wife*, who does not realize that his wife's remarks about 'china' in the famous china scene actually refer to Horner's sexual virility (Hughes 1996: 323-324).

Similar to Lucia's and Julia's linguistic vulnerability, Otway's Lady Duncannon "lacks any received language with which to explain her situation" (Hughes 1996: 229), when Sir Davy discovers her attempted adultery and the wife falsely protests that she has nearly been raped by Beaugard. The wife's demand: "Yes, and before I die too, I'll be justified" (3.2.52) illustrate female vulnerability, whereas Sir Davy's subsequent authoritative warning: "I'll have him hanged for burglary" (3.2.58) shows his position of power. Hughes interprets Lady Duncannon's pretended suicidal determination as "[mimicking] the culturally approved pattern for female response to sexual dishonour" (1996: 229). Munns, as already mentioned in chapter 3.3, interprets Lady Duncannon's act of putting the sword into Sir Davy's hands as a moment of mocking male power, rather than enforcing this power (1995: 61).

6.2 The language of rakes and cuckolded husbands

As far as the language of rakes and husbands is concerned, Chadwick states that there is, on the one hand, the conversation among the grotesques such as Sir Jaspar Fidget and Pinchwife in *The Country Wife* and, on the other hand, there are the dialogues of the rakes as, for example, Horner and Harcourt. Elements such as tone, speech rhythms and verbal idiosyncrasies are used to define the various characters, whereas humour serves the purpose of wit (Chadwick 120). Horner, the main cuckold maker, could be seen as the comic hero of the play. His speech is tightly structured, concise and authoritative. The ironies in his speech, however, make it difficult to take anything that he says at its face value. Horner's effective and sharp wit is expressed in a wide range of puns and many satirical remarks, which result in the duping of self-centred, greedy or hypocritical characters (Markley 162). Many ambiguities of *The Country Wife* are based on puns or on the dramatic extension of puns. An essential pun, for instance, is implied in Horner's name, which reflects a verbal play on the words 'Horner' and 'honour' (Hawkins 112). The protagonist's language stands out in the play as he is the master of puns and uses language as a means of power, which clearly shows his ability to play with the other characters. Pinchwife is aware of Horner's effect on women and the more he is mocked by Horner, the more he is put at unease and loses his temper. This is usually expressed in expletives, which take the form of asides. It is due to Horner's frequent use of similes that Pinchwife loses his temper in the following quote.

HORN. So then you only marry'd to keep a Whore to your self; well, but let me tell you, Women, as you say, are like Souldiers made constant and loyal by good pay, rather than by Oaths and Covenants, therefore I'd advise my Friends to keep rather than marry; since too I find by your example, it does not serve ones turn, for I saw you yesterday in the eighteen penny place with a pretty Country-wench.

PINCH. How the Divel, did he see my Wife then? I sate there that she might not be seen, but she shall never go to a play again. *Aside.* (2.1.559-570)

The husband Pinchwife brutally tries to make language an agent of his hand, when he threatens Margery: "Write as I bid you, or I will write Whore with this Penknife in your Face" (4.3.117-118). However, Margery, who is originally restricted only to baby-talk, matures in the course of the play, gains control of her language and finally learns how to write a proper love letter to Horner (Hughes 1996: 141). The language used in Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune* contains considerably more violent images than *The Country*

Wife. The rake Beaugard lives “in a society where degree and authority have lost any basis in birth or merit” (Hughes 1996: 227), and therefore human relationships are portrayed as relationships of power and violence, as for example, in the frequent meetings between Beaugard and Sir Davy. Formal courtesy, which is used by the men at the beginning, clearly turns into violent rituals over the course of the play (Hughes 1996: 228). As regards Dryden’s *The Kind Keeper*, the use of language not only portrays a world that is ordered solely by sexual craving, but also shows that “shared language and a shared sense of national identity are diminished” (Hughes 1996: 220). Woodall, for example, impersonates an Italian seller of essences and, due to his lack of the foreign language, makes use of signs and invents some kind of “pseudo-Italian” (Hughes 1996: 220), which nonetheless convinces the foolish keeper Limberham. The chauvinistic witwoud Brainsick “also pushes language towards dissolution” (Hughes 1996: 220) and even “strips language of all significance” (Hughes 1996: 220), when he stands guard at the door, believing it is Tricksy whom Woodall pleases inside, as illustrated in the following quote.

LIM. How now, Bully *Brainsick*! What, upon the *Tan ta ra*, by your self?

BRAIN. Clangor, *Taratantara*, Murmur.

LIM. Commend me to honest *Lingua Franca*. Why, this is enough to stun a Christian, with your *Hebrew*, and your *Greek*, and such like *Latin*.

BRAIN. Out, Ignorance!

LIM. Then Ignorance, by your leave; for I must enter. (5.1.116-123)

In Behn’s *The Lucky Chance*, similar to Otway’s *The Soldiers’ Fortune*, language is frequently used to express not only sexual appetite, but also economic interest. In the dice-game scene, which shows Gayman and Sir Cautious in the middle of the stage, Julia is not only the spectator, but also “the butt of a sexual joke” (Copeland 75) expressed in a wordplay. When she inquires what they are playing for, Sir Cautious answers: “Nothing, nothing, but a trial of skill between an old man and a young; and your ladyship is to be judge” (4.1.437-438). Similar to Anderson (105-106), Copland notes that “[Julia’s] value is conflated with her sexuality through Gayman’s punning on ‘nothing’ as slang for female genitalia” (75). Sir Cautious’ treatment of Julia as a commodity is particularly clear in his answer to Julia’s question about what he has lost in the game: “Only a small parcel of ware that lay dead upon my hands, sweetheart” (4.1.457-458).

Generally speaking, Restoration comedies contain many metaphors that create a very imaginative language, and a large number of double entendres that enforce the common sexual double think. Women alongside cheated husbands and duped sparks are one of the main targets of satiric comments. Certain characteristics of women are caricatured, in order to seem ridiculous (Jantz 182-183). In the following example taken from *The Country Wife*, Horner talks about women and compares them to spaniels and concludes that dogs are more faithful than women.

HOR. So is that soft, gentle, tame, and more noble Creature a Spaniel, and has all their tricks, can fawn, lye down, suffer beating, and fawn the more; barks at your Friends, when they come to see you; makes your bed hard, gives you Fleas, and the mange sometimes: and all the difference is, the Spaniel's the more faithful Animal, and fawns but upon one Master. (2.1.564-571)

Horner's demeaning sexist remarks in the quote above show that women are often degraded by men in Restoration comedy. Horner's misogynist claims that a spaniel not only behaves in a nobler way than a woman, but that it is also more faithful than the female sex, create bestial imagery. Women, indeed, frequently serve as the target of satirical remarks when they are compared to animals, books, food or even diseases. Very often the women's hypocritical behaviour and affectation are satirized and they are portrayed as being a burden and unreliable. In the following lines, Pinchwife compares women to items of consumption, suggesting that once a man has finished 'a cover'd Dish' (3.1), he soon develops a new appetite for another.

PIN. So – I have it – I'll dress her up in the Suit, we are to carry down to her Brother, little Sir *James*; nay, I understand the Town tricks: Come let's go dress her; a Mask! No – a Woman mask'd, like a cover'd Dish, gives a Man curiosity, and appetite, when, it may be uncover'd, 'twou'd turn his stomach; no, no. (3.1.125-131)

In the following quote, Dorilant compares mistresses to Country retreats and regards women as interchangeable objects. Harcourt likens mistresses to books and claims that women, like an affliction, cause physical or mental suffering, which time and medicine will soon cure. It is implied that love is regarded as a bodily affliction and, therefore, seen as something negative. Thus, the relation to a woman will always be as brief as a man can make it.

H A R. No, Mistresses are like Books; if you pore upon them too much, they doze you and make you unfit for Company; but if us'd discreetly, you are the fitter for conversation by 'em.

D O R. A Mistress should be like a little Country retreat near the Town; not to dwell in constantly, but only for a night and away; to tast the Town the better when a Man returns. (1.1.262-266)

The words *conversation* and *country* serve as double entendres, both referring to sexual intercourse. As already illustrated, it is not only the men in the play who make regular use of double entendres, but it is especially Lady Fidget and her friends who when talking about 'china' in Horner's lodgings constantly make references to Horner's potency and the sexual pleasures he provides. China becomes the focus for undercurrents of false intimacy and hypocrisy. The word *china*, which originally refers to a fragile, nicely decorated object, used to serve one's appetite, adopts a metaphorical sense in the play (Markley 174-175). In the following quote, taken from Pix's *The Spanish Wives*, witty Elenora makes frequent use of similes when warning the Marquess about the female sex. By comparing the female sex to water, she mocks the Marquess' notorious jealousy and hints that a woman who is imprisoned in a forced marriage will sooner or later try to escape it.

M A R Q. [...] The roses shall wither in her wanton cheeks; her eyes, whose hot beams dart fire, grow dull and languid:—But all my pangs of jealousy, I'd rather clasp a fiend, than doubting sleep by such an angel.

E L E N. And 'tis thy doubts, Old Man, not I, torment thee—Our sex, like water, glides along pleasant and useful; but if grasped by a too violent hand, unseen they slip away, and prove the fruitless labor vain. (3.2)

Overall, it can be said that it is the style and syntax of language that illustrates the figures' character traits and their capability of wit. Witty male and female characters in the comedies make frequent use of metaphors, puns and similes. Horner, for example, is therefore not only seen as the master of social pretence, but also as the master of language. The true wits' art of speaking enables them to openly mock other characters, most often witwounds, and thus leads the latter to the actions the true wits desire them to take. The many double entendres in the comedies, as already illustrated, often intend common sexual double think, which enables the wives to talk frankly about their sexual desire and, at the same time, to keep an honourable reputation. The double entendres are evidently understood by the witty characters and the audience, but often remain unclear to the witwounds, such as the hypocritical husbands.

7 Conclusion

The analysis above shows that the character of the adulterous wife is defined by the paradigms of a patriarchal authority, which is changing from a feudal to a rising bourgeois ideology. In a patriarchal political economy, such as in the Restoration period, “the exchange of women is central to the system for the transmission of power and property through inheritance” (Canfield 1997: 147-148). Some female tricksters in the plays are “parasites on the hegemonic political economy” (Canfield 1997: 149) and subversive to this system by keeping an active space of their own on the margins of society. It is noteworthy that, as Chernaik states, it is “society [which] creates its rebels” (1). This clearly shows that adulterous wives, who could also be regarded as “dissenters from the established order of family” (Chernaik 1), are a product of the repressive patriarchal authority in the Restoration period. Since rebellious acts, such as adultery, were punished by the established order, women were forced to keep their affairs secret. “In a world where betrayal is the norm, the sex act itself becomes predatory” (Chernaik 4). Therefore, as the examples above clearly prove, “the sexual act [becomes] a symbolic enactment of mastery” (Chernaik 5). Restoration comedies portray a society in which sex is regarded as a measurable commodity by both men and women (Chernaik 5).

The treatment of women’s sexuality in Restoration sex comedies is very ambivalent. Although a number of plays by male playwrights present sexually vigorous women in a sympathetic way, that is, not as sexually voracious libertines, women are nevertheless portrayed as servants to male sexual power. Indeed, female sexuality in libertine works often not only projects men’s desire, but also male anxiety (Chernaik 6-7). The sympathy of male playwrights for self-governing women was clearly restricted by the conventional boundaries between domestic and public life. However, the tormented wife, desiring liberty and freedom, receives widespread approval in the Restoration comedies (Bacon Lance 440).

As regards the differences between male and female playwrights, Anderson notes that the cheerfulness of comedies and their domestic concerns, both often associated with only female playwrights, were in fact frequently used by both male and female authors. What is, however, a typical feature of female comic playwrights such as Aphra Behn is

the strong interest in clandestine, tricked and mock marriage, which can be clearly seen in the selected plays *Sir Patient Fancy* and *The Lucky Chance*. Famous authors of comedies of manners, such as Wycherley, Congreve or Etherege evidently less often use similar themes in their comedies (Anderson 33-34). Regarding Behn's work, it can be said that she was the first woman playwright whose plays were explicitly designed for the stage. Morgan puts forward that the plays by female dramatists, such as Aphra Behn, not only illustrate the authors' variety and vigour, but also their profound knowledge of stage-craft, which made their productions as thriving and successful as those of their male counterparts (xi). Choosing a different genre than most of her famous male counterparts, who mainly produced comedies of manners, Behn decided to focus on the more commercially successful Spanish comedy of intrigue pattern. The plot frequently revolves around several couples' unwanted, but already arranged marriages, and is filled with all kinds of intrigues, mistaken identities, fights, disguises and physical humour. Many of her comedies contain a number of witty songs and are full of funny scenes of bedroom farce, which can be described as wonderful, almost black comedy. However, it should be noted that the playwright also voices serious complaints, as for example, in the attacks on arranged marriages. The reason for marriage, as Behn's plays suggest, needs to be love and not an interest in money or personal advancement (Cotton 60). Interestingly, the women in Behn's comedies are presented as self-governing subjects and not simply as sex objects. Pearson shows that many of Aphra Behn's and Mary Pix's female characters are not only given longer speeches and often also open the plays, but are also more developed than those of male authors (qtd. in Anderson 34).

When it comes to the cuckolding plots, the use of language or the portrayal of gender stereotypes such as the adulterous wives, the rake-hero or the cuckolded husband, the plays by male and female authors show many similarities and hardly any striking differences. Mary Pix's sentimental comedy *The Spanish Wives* 1696, needs to be treated somewhat separately, since by the end of the century the taste of the audience had already changed. The play not only illustrates sexual reform, but also human kindness, reveals a new interest in domestic spheres and promotes the idea that every individual can find a suitable place in society (Hughes 1996: 454).

Considering the miserable situations of young wives in forced loveless marriages, as portrayed in the Restoration comedies, the audience might be lead to assume that women are certainly the weaker sex as regards relations of power. However, the study above clearly shows that such an assumption is misleading, since women prove to be the stronger sex in many respects in the plays analysed. To be more precise, the wives not only exert sexual power, in the sense of sexual attraction, but also financial power, due to their marriage to wealthy husbands. Lady Fulbank in Behn's *The Lucky Chance*, for example, provides Gayman with her husband's money, in order to buy his love and make up for her decision to marry a mercenary, rich banker, and Lady Duncannon in Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune*, even hires a pimp in order to buy Beaugard's sexual services with gold. In contrast to the adulterous wives, the husbands, who are often portrayed as presumably impotent or sexually weak, are obviously deprived of their sexual power. The aristocratic rakes, quite on the contrary, are sexually virile, but have lost financial and political power in a Whig-dominated society. The only exception is the sexually virile and wealthy Horner in *The Country Wife*, who sacrifices his excellent sexual reputation in society for the pleasure of cuckolding newly rich businessmen, such as Sir Jaspar Fidget. Horner's presumed loss of manhood, which is implicit in his false reputation of a eunuch, is indeed much more typical of husbands than of rakes.

Many wives engage in adulterous affairs not because of their libertine nature, which would be typical of the many rakes, but because the women were robbed off their true love. Therefore, the audience is made to side with the wives such as Leticia or Lady Fancy, to name but a few. Another reason why female tricksters and their actions receive the audience's strong support is that women are treated as commodities in a patriarchal economic society. Due to the sexual double standard of the time, as already mentioned earlier, women needed to keep their affairs secret. Keeping an affair secret also meant keeping an honourable reputation in society, which often did not lie in the wives' own hands, but in those of the rakes. The fact that women's sexual secrets depended on the power of men not only mirrors the institution of marriage, but Restoration society in general, which deprived women of their freedom and liberty. When it comes to plotting the adulterous acts, the wives in the plays are left to their own intriguing skills and their reliance on trustworthy servants. This shows that the women are also superior in wit to the rakes, except for Horner, who provides an equal match for Lady Fidget and the virtuous gang. Although the wives are often the wittier characters,

and sexually and financially more powerful than their male counterparts, the women's lives and their freedom are suppressed in Restoration society. In a patriarchal society, the wife serves as the husband's property and, treated as a mere means of exchange, is handed over from one man to the next. This proves that social forces clearly try to restrain women's sexuality and power. With reference to Otway's *The Soldiers' Fortune*, Munns states that "financially empowered women degrade virility and subvert authority" (1995: 78), which illustrates the "widespread social disorder" (1995: 78) in the Restoration period. Therefore, the wives' adulterous acts should not be regarded as the women's lewdness, but as their attempts to escape the restraining and repressive forces of a patriarchal political economy in which women serve as exchangeable objects. The successful cuckolding of husbands not only points to the weakening of social forces, but also indicates the failure of masculine authority.

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³ The online version of *The London Cuckolds* and the printed versions of *Sir Patient Fancy* and *The Spanish Wives* do not provide numbered lines. Quotes from these plays, therefore, only include act and scene number.

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Appendix

Summary in German

Im Zuge der Diplomarbeit mit dem Titel *Adulterous Wives in Restoration Comedy* erfolgt eine Darstellung des Bildes der untreuen Ehefrau anhand von sieben ausgewählten Restaurationskomödien. Der starke Fokus der bisherigen Literatur auf den Charakter des Liebhabers und Lebemanns (rake-hero) gab den Ausgangspunkt mittels einer Analyse die Rolle der untreuen Ehefrau (adulterous wife) in den Mittelpunkt dieser Arbeit zu rücken. Die folgenden sieben bekannten Werke, angeführt in chronologischer Reihenfolge, wurden für die Analyse herangezogen.

William Wycherley	<i>The Country Wife</i>	1675
Aphra Behn	<i>Sir Patient Fancy</i>	1678
John Dryden	<i>The Kind Keeper; Or, Mr Limberham</i>	1678
Thomas Otway	<i>The Soldiers' Fortune</i>	1680
Edward Ravenscroft	<i>The London Cuckolds</i>	1681
Aphra Behn	<i>The Lucky Chance; Or, An Alderman's Bargain</i>	1686
Mary Pix	<i>The Spanish Wives</i>	1696

Die angeführten Sexkomödien (sex comedies) sind deshalb von Relevanz für diese Arbeit, da in allen Stücken der ehebrüchige, sexuelle Akt der Frau mit ihrem Liebhaber (cuckolding act) von zentraler Bedeutung ist. Sexkomödien sind Stücke, die in einer Zeitspanne von etwa 20 Jahren nach der Stuart-Restauration von Charles II im Jahre 1660 geschrieben wurden. In diesen Komödien werden die Grenzen sexueller Beziehungen ausgetestet und die traditionellen autoritären Strukturen herausgefordert. Der Fokus dieser Komödien liegt meist auf einem jungen Liebespaar, das versucht der permanenten Kontrolle von Eltern oder Ehemännern zu entkommen.

Im Laufe der Arbeit werden nicht nur Stereotypen der Restaurationskomödie, wie zum Beispiel der Lebemann (rake-hero), der gehörnte Ehemann, auch genannt Hahnrei (cuckolded husband), oder die untreue Ehefrau (adulterous wife) analysiert, sondern es werden auch die sozialen Strukturen in der postrevolutionären Welt der Stuart-Restauration dargestellt. Die historische Interpretation der Sexkomödien verlagerte den Fokus von Sexualität auf politische Strukturen und Machtkämpfe. Die sexuelle Betätigung der Charaktere wird deshalb auch stellvertretend für größere soziale Mächte gesehen, wie zum Beispiel Klassenkonflikte oder politische Auseinandersetzungen. Die sexuellen Wünsche und Sehnsüchte der Charaktere stehen also nicht für Sexualität im eigentlichen Sinne, sondern für Klassenkonflikte oder politische Machtkämpfe. Des

Weiteren werden die Stücke von weiblichen und männlichen Autoren verglichen und es wird versucht Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten in der Darstellung der Charaktere herauszufinden. Das patriarchale System der Restaurationszeit zwang viele junge Frauen, sich gegen ihre Liebe und für eine glücklose Heirat mit reichen, älteren und oft impotenten Männern zu entscheiden. Interessanterweise sind es die potenten Liebhaber, die die Affären anzetteln, aber die Frauen, die diese dann oft gemeinsam mit ihren Bediensteten planen. Die außerehelichen Affären von Frauen mussten auf Grund der dominanten sexuellen Doppelmoral dieser Zeit geheim bleiben, um ihre Ehre in der Gesellschaft zu schützen, während die sexuellen Affären von Ehemännern meist ungetadelt blieben.

Zu Beginn der Arbeit erfolgt eine kurze Zusammenfassung der Ehrechte und der sexuellen Doppelmoral in der Zeit des 17. Jahrhunderts, die auch im Theater vorherrschend war. Im dritten Kapitel werden die Charaktere analysiert und der sexuelle und politische Machtkampf untersucht. Im vierten Teil der Arbeit werden der außereheliche sexuelle Akt und seine Bedeutung für die jeweiligen Charaktere, sowie die Motivationen der untreuen Ehefrau und des Liebhabers untersucht. Das fünfte Kapitel zeigt auf welche Weise der Körper der Frau und ihr Verhalten in der Gesellschaft als Mittel zur Täuschung eingesetzt werden. Die Sprache als Machtmittel und Täuschungsinstrument wird im sechsten Kapitel untersucht und die linguistischen Charakteristika der Charaktere werden dargestellt.

Die politisch wachsende Macht der Whigs, dargestellt durch die gehörnten Ehemänner, und die gleichzeitige Schwächung der Monarchie, dargestellt durch die Liebhaber, sind ein dominantes Thema in den Komödien. Dieser politische Machtkampf und die Klassenkonflikte werden in den sexuellen Akten ausgetragen. Frauen werden deshalb oft als Gegenstände oder Waren betrachtet, die zwischen Männern ausgetauscht werden. Der außereheliche sexuelle Akt der Frau und ihrem Liebhaber (cuckolding act) wird unter anderem als sexueller Akt beschrieben, der von einem Mann auf den anderen ausgeführt wird. Frauen werden in der patriarchalen Gesellschaft unterdrückt und gezwungen nicht aus Liebe, sondern aus finanziellen Gründen zu heiraten. Die einzige Möglichkeit für kurze Zeit aus dem Gefängnis der lieblosen Ehe zu entfliehen stellt der außereheliche Sex dar. Dieser muss jedoch geheim bleiben, da die gesellschaftlichen Maßnahmen und Konventionen Frauen dazu zwingen ein Bild von Tugend, Moral und Treue aufrechtzuerhalten.

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